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The Unesco Courier

children of the imagination

A time to live...

Photo © Ernst Lichtenhahn, Basle, Switzerland

❸ NIGER

The rhythm of the water drum

"Man cannot remain in a village where there are no musicians", says a proverb of the Dan people of west Africa. This saying serves as a reminder that on every continent and in every age a people's music and the instruments on which it is played have reflected the deepest cultural values of their civilization. The preservation of traditional instruments and forms of musical expression, which are today dying out in many parts of the world, is a problem with which Unesco is increasingly concerned as part of its mission to protect the cultural heritage of mankind. Photo shows a Tuareg girl of the Republic of Niger with an *asakhalabbo,* a ritual water drum.

The Unesco Courier

A window open on the world

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Editorial

THE World Congress on Books, the first international, interdisciplinary gathering of book specialists on a worldwide scale to be convened by Unesco, is to be held in London from 7 to 11 June 1982. To coincide with this major event, this issue of the Unesco Courier *is devoted to literature for children.*

Despite the many obstacles to its spread in the developing world (illiteracy being the most serious), children's literature is more and more becoming part of the common heritage of the young and serving as a link between cultures and peoples.

Literature conceived specifically for the young and featuring youthful heroes and heroines, only really developed in the western world during the nineteenth century. Today, the production of children's books represents a rapidly expanding sector of the publishing industry. Although some critics have seen this expansion as being motivated by the desire for profits as much as by any educative spirit, in both the industrialized and the developing world it has some remarkable achievements to its credit.

Nevertheless, the desire and need to spin tales for young people, both for their entertainment and as a means of passing on to them the collective wisdom of the group, are certainly as old as mankind's earliest cultural experiences.

Thus, rather than attempt to determine the limits, whether historical or of form, of a literary genre so difficult to define that certain writers, like Michel Tournier, deny that any such limits exist, seeing in it the quintessence of all literature, in this issue of the Unesco Courier *we have chosen to give a panoramic, though not an exhaustive, picture of the heroes and heroines of children's literature.*

It is no accident that, almost everywhere, the earliest major works written for children have drawn their inspiration from the oral tradition and, above all, from tales with an initiatory content, whether for children or adults, as witness the central place held by such tales in the African social life and ethic.

Clearly, we cannot restrict ourselves to the adolescent or child hero, to Pinocchio, Alice, Little Ivan or Huckleberry Finn. Over the years young readers have claimed for themselves tales from a wider literature or legendary figures not primarily intended for them, but who are imbued with a mixture of liberating power and inspired fantasy. Among these must be counted Goha the Wise Fool and, in another vein, Sandokan the Malay pirate and a host of other characters who belong to literature for everyone.

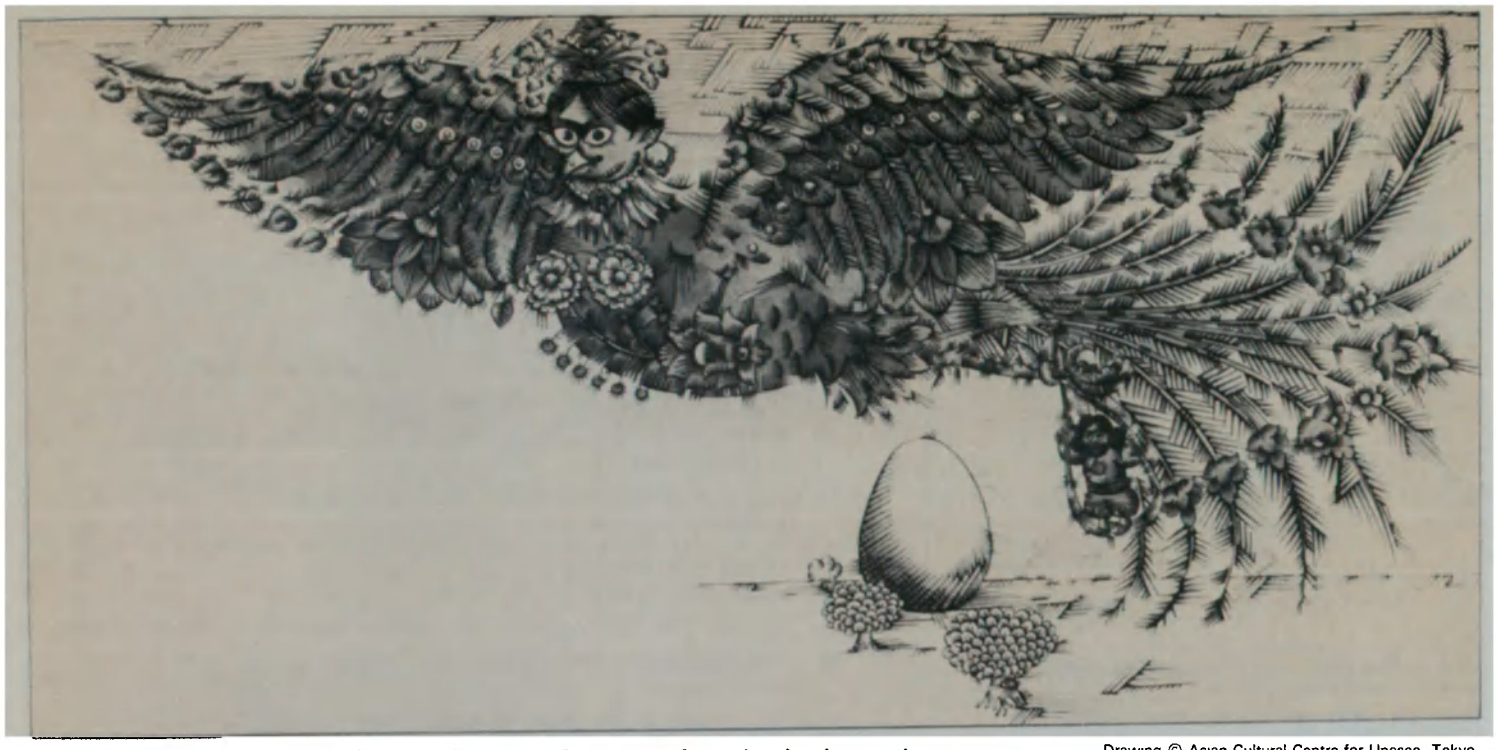
In dominated societies, the young reader identifies himself more readily with the adventurer and the upholder of justice who fights against tyranny and all forms of oppression, the revolutionary model whom he usually finds in adult literature.

In some types of "oral literature", however, particularly in Africa, the omnipresent child hero is raised to the status of a symbol. He embodies the spirit of good or the forces of evil and is seen not as an individual but as "The Child", an anonymous, superior embodiment of the hopes and fears of the social group.

Another hero figure who must not be forgotten here is the prestigious animal intermediary or intercessor, such as that great favourite with Chinese children the Monkey King Sun Wukong.

Finally, mention must be made of the strip cartoon hero. Although the strip cartoon still too often remains a mediocre consumer product purveying a suspect ideology, it has become a means of communication of worldwide importance which, whether we like it or not, contributes equally with literature to the "inner growth" of the child.

Cover drawing © Josef Palecek, Prague



Drawing © Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco, Tokyo

"The fundamental element in tales is the journey... Any means from the simplest to the most extraordinary can be used... wax wings that are likely to melt if they fly too close to the sun or the claws of Roc, the bird that carried Sinbad." The drawing is by the Iranian artist Ali Akbar Sadeghi, winner of the Grand Prix of the *Noma Concours for Children's Picture Book Illustrations '78,* a competition organized by the Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco, Tokyo.

THE LANDSCAPE OF THE TALE

by Fernando Savater

IF one had to sum up in a few words the message of tales, the quintessence of legends and the lesson of adventure stories, these words might be: *a longing for independence, intrepidity* and *generosity.* Tales tell of man's perplexity and watchfulness and, in the last analysis, of his faith in himself; or of the faith of each man in himself and of mankind in what is human in all men. Such faith is deeper and stronger than the pursuit at all costs of a "happy ending".

I am referring here to tales, legends, epic poems and adventure novels, to all forms of fiction in which action takes precedence over passion, the exceptional over the humdrum of everyday life, travel over immobility, initiation over routine, ethics over psychology, and invention over literalness in description. After all, many literary classifications are academic rather than really pertinent. As Lope de Vega wrote in *La Filomena:* "At a time less wise than ours, but when men knew more than we do, novels were called tales". And so in this article I too shall refer to fiction as "tales"—tales which express all the dreams of childhood and the aspirations of adolescence and which accompany us throughout our lives.

I mentioned independence and intrepidity —in other words, the wish to go out into the world, to break with the warm, routine torpor of the home where the spirit is shaped but where it can also become atrophied and stifled. In tales, the motive force is the constant *temptation of the outdoors.* A temptation which both attracts and repels,

FERNANDO SAVATER, *is a young Spanish writer and philosopher who is professor of Ethics at the País Vasco University, San Sebastián. He is the author of some 15 works of philosophy, essays and a novel.*

Drawing Eduardo Ruiz © CERLAL, Bogota

"Tales tell of man's perplexity and watchfulness and, in the last analysis, of his faith in himself." Drawing by the Argentine artist Eduardo Ruiz, for the Venezuelan story *The Legend of Maichak,* from *Tales and Legends of Latin America.* The first volume of this publication—conceived and produced by Unesco's Regional Centre for Book Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAL)—is a compilation of tales and traditions from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela specially prepared for young readers and illustrated by Latin American artists.

fascinates and frightens. The hero of the tale is forever "roaming the world" in order to find out what is happening beyond the mountains; sometimes he tries to discover the nature of fear, for he dimly perceives that the realm of fear lies on the borders of space and that the distant horizon is always overshadowed by a somewhat frightening halo; but he knows, too, that to achieve its true stature the human spirit must face those frightening, far-distant reaches at least once in a lifetime.

The home is not enough: if the young adventurer never leaves home he will not experience fear and acquire the knowledge essential to his development, he will not even experience nostalgia which, in a sense, he needs even more. If he has no conception of fear or of nostalgia, he will know nothing of the human way of living in a home, for this implies above all that one has *returned*.

The child lives in a home that he has not yet conquered, governed by rules and regulations which, for him, are as immutable as the laws of nature. He must leave home before returning to it *fully aware* and sitting by a fire lit from the embers he has brought back from some distant volcano. Roaming the world means running risks, accepting the possibility that one may get lost, and giving oneself the opportunity to go astray. Anyone who has not got completely lost at least once in his lifetime will live in his dwelling like a piece of furniture, oblivious of the feats and conquests that are needed to underpin the peaceful structure of everyday life. But the child feels this instinctively, and it is because he loves the home that will one day be his, because he has faith in the man he will become, that one fine day he silently leaves the family home at daybreak, a bundle on his shoulder, bound for the distant horizon and the as yet unknown realm of fear.

Each home is the result of an adventure, but for the child it is someone else's adventure. He must rise against routine which appears mechanical and apathetic. For no one can permanently change his life and the lives of his descendants as required by the powerful dream of the founder-hero: the serene splendour won by audacity and valiant effort, and the order obtained through guile which no monster or catastrophe can discourage, redeem him who achieves them, but the repetition of the same deeds merely subjugates their offspring. The moral is that it is not enough to be an heir: every legacy must be reconquered—it must be lost before it can be won back triumphantly. It is respect for the efforts of parents that develops into revolt against them: to become self-sufficient, and even to rebel is to *understand* the sum of human effort needed to achieve order and to *realize* that order is not merely suffered or tolerated and that the form it takes implies a certain freedom of choice. Some tales tell of young heroes (the protagonist is nearly always a representative of the archetype of *puer aeternus*, an adolescent who has the child's carefree curiosity and playfulness along with the father's educational and social proclivities) who succeed in reinventing new ways of organizing the world or of warding off threats to existing forms of organization.

As always the lesson they offer is ambiguous and two-sided: only those who break with daily routine deserve to have a house, only rebels who refuse to submit to anything can say they have roamed the world, and it is only in the regained peacefulness of routine that they can fully appreciate the revelation of fear.

The child sets out to roam the world; the morning is fresh and new, the countryside is coming to life, the sun has started on its ascending course... in the distance are great trees and blue mountains; the traveller closes the door of his house behind him and begins his journey. Landscapes are the very fabric of tales, in the same way that "we are such stuff as dreams are made on", according to Shakespeare. For the fundamental element in tales is the *journey* which removes the hero from the closed, secure atmosphere of the family, exposing him to the unforeseen, to adventure. Any means from the simplest to the most extraordinary can be used to ▶

Photo © Cinémathèque française, Paris

"...the sea which unites and separates, offering permanent promise of far-off adventures... whether the action takes place on its unruly waves or in its depths..." In this still from John Huston's film *Moby Dick*, the great white whale turns furiously on the crew of Captain Ahab's whaler the *Pequod*.

Photo © Cinémathèque française, Paris

"The young hero's astuteness and the information he possesses... do not serve so much to show how reality operates as to stress the hero's qualities and efficacity." Still from a film by Alexander Korda depicts Mowgli, the hero of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*.

"For readers (or those who listen to the tale) of the adventures of Little Red Riding Hood... the word 'wood' is more mysterious and threatening than the 'forest' itself." Engraving of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf, by Gustave Doré.

achieve this goal. It is good and bracing to walk, but even better to don Tom Thumb's Seven-League Boots in order to escape the Ogre who is pursuing him; a horse, a camel, or even an elephant can be pressed into service, and the lucky children for whom Jules Verne invented a two-year holiday did not refuse to ride ostriches. And what about flying? Here too, the possibilities are legion, ranging from wax wings that are likely to melt if they fly too close to the sun, or the claws of Roc the bird that carried Sinbad, to balloons, comets, magic broomsticks and flying carpets, to the winged Pegasus on which Perseus came to rescue Andromeda, and the ultra-sophisticated spaceships of contemporary science fiction. The same goes for sea travel; anything that floats can serve as a boat: the little princess's cockle-shell, the little tin soldier's paper boat, or the coffin that enabled Ishmael to save his life after the wreck of the *Pequod* brought about by the anger of Moby Dick, not to mention the possibility of crossing the sea on the back of an obliging dolphin or clutching the shell of a giant tortoise.

Even a simple *fall* is an acceptable means of transport, as discovered by Alice when she dashed into the rabbit-warren leading to Wonderland, or by those characters from the Thousand-and-One-Nights who walk where they are not supposed to walk, or take a false step and land in a cave full of treasure. (Something similar happened to Kipling's Mowgli when he landed inadvertently in a cave full of amazing riches guarded over by a big white cobra).

"The wood is the home of the wolf and the Ogre's hunting ground... a place of perdition and destruction, of hostile darkness and of brambles whose thorns arrest the tired traveller's progress." Engraving by Gustave Doré for *Tom Thumb*.

What is at stake here is to go far to achieve as soon as possible the undomestic fulfilment of the free-ranging landscape: this can apply equally well to the relatively close but always enigmatic Nature that I see in the distance from my window, or to the fabulous land into which I am wafted by a tornado, or, again, as in the *Wizard of Oz*, to a thirst for exploration. As soon as the journey starts nothing is as before, everything becomes exotic and anything can happen.

Each component of the landscape possesses its own significance. This is no neutral or "natural" setting in the positivist or anti-magical sense given to the term by the modern world; it is the most mysterious and fantastic décor of all, for the scenery in which the action is set is part and parcel of that action. The protagonists find themselves in either a hostile or a friendly relationship with the elements of natural spontaneity which surround them, and these elements in turn *behave* towards them in a specific way. The relationship between the young hero and the landscape is not one of indifference; on the contrary, it is a confrontation at a high level as befits anyone who has left home in search of distinction and must prove himself capable of discerning the forces that challenge his initiation and of accepting their often dangerous scrutiny.

The hero must face the *genius loci* wherever he goes, wrestle with him, defeat him or convince him. A certain animistic belief in Nature is essential if the tale is to be successful; its impact is reduced when organic chemistry or molecular biology are substituted for the secret powers of the local divinity. If only aspects of the physical and chemical causality taught by modern science come into play, then *anyone* can triumph in any given situation, provided he possesses the necessary knowledge; but what the tale demands of its hero is action of a very different kind which highlights every possible victory to the utmost: only he who *is* in a specific way, we are told, can *know* what there is to know.

The young hero's astuteness and the information he possesses—generally provided by allies endowed with magical powers whose support he has had to win—do not serve so much to show how reality operates as to stress the hero's qualities and efficacity. Certain contemporary writers tend to create "natural", science-based values which run counter to this typical nineteenth century approach. It is no coincidence that the tremendous popularity of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*—the supreme example of a tale with an entirely animistic and ethical landscape—should coincide with the rise of the ecology movement and that it should be hippies and other supporters of the protection of Nature against industry who should have been the first to enthuse over the Hobbits' extraordinary saga.

Each culture and each latitude attributes a different value to the various elements that make up the landscape according to whether they represent for them routine or exoticism. An anecdote told by Borges illustrates the relativity of exoticism—which is as legitimate a way as any other of satisfying our powers of imagination. A Japanese was giving a rapturous description of a trip he had made to Persia, and when Borges praised the remarkable achievements of Firdausi's and Omar Khayyam's homeland, he said: "Yes, I finally realized what the West is".

In the same way, our mythical perception of the sea varies according to whether we live in direct contact with it or in the hinterland. Similarly, some people regard the lion as an almost fabulous beast, while for others he is simply a distinguished fellow-citizen. I myself can only speak of the tales on which my European childhood was nourished. What stood out above all was the prestige of the *wood* with its shadowy, ghostlike quality. For readers (or those who listen to the tale) of the adventures of Little Red Riding Hood, Tom Thumb and Hansel and Gretel, the word "wood" is more mysterious and threatening than the "forest" itself. The wood is the home of the wolf and the Ogre's hunting ground; there are no proper paths in the wood or else they all lead to the man-eating witch who is waiting in its midst; it is a place of perdition and destruction, of hostile darkness and of brambles whose thorns arrest the tired traveller's progress; salvation can only come from co-operation with small animals (birds, squirrels, rabbits, etc.) who join in helping children lost in the wood by guiding them to its edge and by warning their parents. Apart from the wood, which for the European represents the most easily accessible form of exoticism and the most credible type of adventure, other less accessible wonders include: the *desert* through which we roam with Beau Geste or the little heroes of Sienkiewicz's tale; the *volcano* which leads us to the centre of the earth with Jules Verne's characters and which is a source of destruction for the decadent Pompeii of Bulwer-Lytton; the *cave* guarded by melancholy dragons or ingenious goblins in which magicians and forgotten kings hide their treasure; *snow* and *ice*, an indispensable setting for polar adventures that is so often present in Hans Christian Andersen's incomparable tales (in particular when the Snow Queen receives little Kay in her ice palace); the *island* where Robinson Crusoe finds a refuge, and its rivals, *mountains*, *swamps* and, above all, the *sea*. The sea of Ulysses and Long John Silver, of the little Mermaid and Moby Dick, Sinbad the Sailor and Kipling's Captains Courageous, a sea which unites and separates, offering a permanent promise of far-off adventures —and of the greatest of all: adventure *per se*. Whether the action takes place on its unruly waves or in its depths into which the great Alexander, known as Iskander by the Hindustans he conquered, descended in a glass bell, the sea remains the landscape *par excellence* of adventure narrative.

Our spirit travels through tales and with tales, it takes risks, makes commitments and is born anew. Under the spell of the narrative the child and the adolescent feel that the inevitable can be defied and everything is possible. The strength of their character in years to come and the choice which will shape the course of their future lives either towards passive submission or towards active freedom depends to a large extent on the training in generosity and courage that fantasy can provide.

■ Fernando Savater

ALL ABOUT ALICE

by Anthony Burgess

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LEWIS Carroll, who wrote *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking-Glass,* was, in private life, a professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford named Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. He latinized Lutwidge to Ludovicus or Lewis and Charles to Carolus or Carroll, and, under this name, produced the first Alice book in 1865 and the second in 1872.

He produced other books as well—mostly on difficult mathematical subjects. Queen Victoria, enchanted by the Alice books, asked for all of Mr Carroll's publications and was▶

ANTHONY BURGESS, *internationally known British novelist, critic and man of letters, is currently at work on his 45th book. His works include* A Clockwork Orange *(1962, filmed 1971),* Nothing Like the Sun *(1964) a fictionalized version of Shakespeare's life, and* Here Comes Everybody *(1965) an introduction to James Joyce. His most recent novel,* Earthly Powers, *was published in 1980.*

Photos © The Mansell Collection, London

Above, Alice Liddell, on whom the character of Alice was based, photographed in the late 1850s by Lewis Carroll himself. Alice, Lorina and Edith Liddell were the daughters of Henry Liddell, dean of Christ Church, Oxford, where Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Carroll's real name) was a lecturer in mathematics. On July 4 1862, Dodgson rowed the three children up the Thames from Oxford to Godstow for a picnic and it was during this outing that he recounted the story of *Alice's Adventures Underground* which, with some additions and revision, was published in 1865 as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Top left, pen and ink sketch of Alice (the character in his book) drawn by Dodgson in 1886. Left, Alice Liddell (seated) and her sister Lorina, in Japanese costume. The photograph is thought to have been taken by Lewis Carroll.

THE WHITE RABBIT: ***...when the rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for... she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it... "Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!"***

▶bewildered by the delivery of treatises on trigonometry and the binomial theory. Lewis Carroll was also the first of the great photographers, and his studies of children—especially of little Alice Liddell, who was both the heroine and the first reader of the two great books—have a charm and a mastery of technique envied by the snappers of today.

He also loved little girls and did not like them to grow into big ones, though he was vague about the moment of change. He tried to kiss big seventeen-year-old young ladies and was surprised that their mothers should protest. His love of girls, which he was too innocent to interpret sexually, had perhaps something to do with his desire to remain a child himself. Although he practised the adult art of mathematics, which children hate because it is too abstract, he did not really wish to have the responsibilities of an adult.

He never married, he was deeply and innocently religious, he liked to be cut off from the dangerous outside world. He was happy to be enclosed by the walls of an Oxford college and to tell stories to the little daughter of Dr Liddell, the great Greek scholar. But the publication of the two Alice books brought him fame. There was something in them which touched strings in the adult imagination and yet pleased and continues to please children. Carroll was a greater man than he knew.

Both the Alice books are fantasies, aspects of the love of nonsense which was prevalent in England in the Victorian age. There was no nonsense in the rest of the world. When, in the early years of the twentieth century, France began to discover the delights of nonsense, this was called surrealism, and it was regretted that the British were too old-fashioned to produce surrealist writers or painters. But the British had already produced their own surrealists in the staid age of Victoria, and of these perhaps Lewis Carroll was the greatest.

Surrealism consists in destroying the logic of ordinary life and substituting a kind of logic of the unconscious mind. Alice's adventures take the form of dreams in which bizarre things happen, but these things are based on a more serious approach to language than we can permit ourselves in waking life.

By language I mean, of course, the English language in which Carroll wrote; many of his dream-jokes are impossible to render into other tongues. If there is an insect called a butterfly, it seems dreamily logical to have a bread-and-butterfly, and Carroll's illustrator, Tenniel, draws us one of these. The flower known as a dandelion is a dandy lion, hence it can roar. There is a school in which the lessons get shorter every day: the lessons "lessen." If your watch stops, the dreamworld says that time has stopped. The watch of the Mad Hatter and his friends the March Hare and the Dormouse has stopped at

Drawings Sir John Tenniel, Macmillan, London

A MAD TEA-PARTY: ***There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it; a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep... "No room! No room!" they cried out when they saw Alice coming. "There's plenty of room!" said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large armchair at one end of the table.***

THE CROQUET MATCH: ***...the croquet balls were live hedgehogs and the mallets live flamingoes... The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo... just as she had got its neck straightened out, and was going to give the hedgehog a blow with its head, it would twist itself round and look up in her face with such a puzzled expression that she could not help bursting out laughing...***

A PACK OF CARDS: *"Off with her head!" the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved. "Who cares for you?" said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). "You're nothing but a pack of cards!" At this the whole pack rose up into the air and came flying down upon her...*

teatime, so they must go on taking tea for ever.

One of the characters who appears in the looking-glass world is Humpty Dumpty, who is a talking egg. His name not merely describes him: it *is* him (or he). An egg has a hump above and a dump below. He is the most dangerous, and yet the most persuasive, philosopher of language imaginable. He says "There's glory for you", and he explains that "glory" means "a fine knockdown argument." Alice protests, but Humpty Dumpty says "It's a question of who is to be master, you or the word." Words, in other words, can mean what we want them to mean or else what the logic of dreams wants them to mean. Their normal everyday meaning doesn't apply when we pass through the looking-glass.

Alice's world is a world full of eccentric English Victorians disguised mostly as animals. Like real grown-ups they can be very rude or pompous to a child like Alice, but in her dreams Alice can answer back without being punished for her effrontery. She is temporarily living in a kind of Garden of Eden, in which total liberty seems to be possible—in Wonderland Alice can change her shape and size merely by drinking from a bottle that says DRINK ME—but liberty is circumscribed not by notions of right and wrong but by mad logic. In the songs she hears or sings herself this mad logic seems to disappear, but there is

THE LION AND THE UNICORN: *"You don't know how to manage Looking-glass cakes", the Unicorn remarked. "Hand it round first and cut it afterwards." This sounded nonsense, but Alice very obediently got up and carried the dish round, and the cake divided itself up into three pieces as she did so. "Now cut it up", said the Lion as she returned to her place with the empty dish.*

HUMPTY DUMPTY: *"Now take a good look at me! I'm one that has spoken to a King, I am; mayhap you'll never see such another; and to show you I'm not proud, you may shake hands with me!" And he grinned almost from ear to ear, as he leant forward (and as nearly as possible fell off the wall in doing so) and offered Alice his hand.*

substituted for it the spirit of parody, which implies an existing logic in the waking world. Alice knows very well a song that goes:

Twinkle twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky.

This becomes:

Twinkle twinkle little bat,
How I wonder what you're at,
Up above the world so high,
Like a teatray in the sky.

Why bat? Why teatray? For that matter, why is a raven like a writing-desk? We feel that if we dig deeply enough we shall find our answers, but there is no time for digging, except for apples. If, in French, potatoes are *pommes de terre*, they are apples in the earth, and digging is quite in order.

It is the very English eccentricity of the denizens of Wonderland and the ▶

▶Looking-Glass world that endears them to us. The White Rabbit, the Ugly Duchess, the Queen of Hearts, the White Knight, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, marvellously drawn by Tenniel, are also very fully characterized by Carroll. They speak as we would expect them to speak, and they are full of an appalling self-will and vigour. But the men are less vigorous than the women. It is a child's world of petticoat government in which the women—mothers, sisters, governesses—are near and magisterial, as well as wantonly cruel, while fathers are more distant, nicer, and busied with their own eccentric affairs.

But finally the appeal of the Alice books is to the creative imagination, by which space and time can become plastic and language itself diverted from the everyday course of straightforward communication. There is a strange poem, which Humpty Dumpty kindly explains to Alice, that sums up the possibilities of the dreaming world. It is called "Jabberwocky" and it begins:

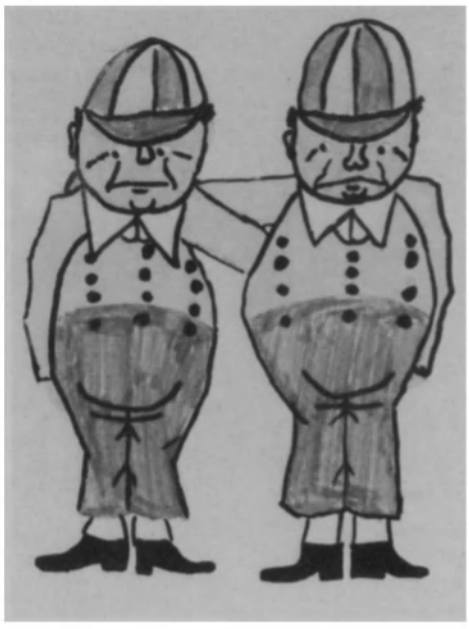
Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe.
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Slithy" is both slimy and lithe, to gyre is to girate, to gimble is both to gambol like a lamb and to turn like a gimlet or corkscrew. Humpty Dumpty calls these "portmanteau words," because, like portmanteaux, several things can be crammed into them. James Joyce saw the possibilities of this Jabberwocky language and, in his great novel *Finnegans Wake,* which presents an adult, not a child's, dream, he used the technique. What, with Carroll, began as a joke ends, in Joyce, as the most serious attempt ever made to show how the dreaming mind operates.

But we leave it to the psychologists and literary critics to find in the Alice books great profundities and profound ambiguities. The Freudians have seen sexual symbols in them, which Carroll's innocent conscious mind could not be aware of, and the Marxists have seen images of social tyranny and revolt. We are wisest if we become children again and use the books to recapture a lost innocence. We must learn to identify ourselves with a girl in a Victorian frock whose hair is long and golden and whose manner has the self-assurance of a product of the Victorian ruling class.

To be honest, Alice is not a very nice little girl. She is far too sharp and bossy and proud. She lacks humility, but—and this is an aspect of the British imperialist spirit—she also lacks fear. It requires great courage, at the trial of the Knave of Hearts, with the Queen shouting "Off with her head!", for her to cry: "You're nothing but a pack of cards!" and to see the chaos of the mass of pasteboard that, a minute ago, was an imperialist society whirling about her head. She is transported to mad colonial territories and retains something of her sanity. She is very British and very Victorian, but she is also admirably and universally human.

■ Anthony Burgess



TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE: *They were standing under a tree, each with an arm around the other's neck... "If you think we're wax-works", said Tweedledum, "you ought to pay you know. Wax-works weren't made to be looked at for nothing. Nohow!". "Contrariwise", added Tweedledee, "if you think we're alive you ought to speak".*

DOWN THE RABBIT-HOLE: *...she went back to the table... and this time she found a little bottle on it ("which was certainly not here before", said Alice), and round its neck a paper label, with the words "DRINK ME" beautifully printed on it in large letters.* Drawings by Sophie and David Brabyn (aged 11), of the U.K., after Sir John Tenniel.

Photo © Editions du Seuil, Paris

LEWIS CARROLL (1832-1898)

Although a brilliant logician and the author of a number of treatises on mathematics, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson is remembered today as Lewis Carroll, the author of two outstanding books for children, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, which are among the most quoted and most translated books in English literature. Dodgson was also a fine photographer and a fair artist. The original manuscript of *Alice* was illustrated with his own pen and ink sketches, but the first published edition was illustrated by John Tenniel, probably the greatest of the many illustrators of the two *Alice* books.

PINOCCHIO
THE EVERGREEN CENTENARIAN

by Italo Calvino

STRANGE though it may seem, Pinocchio is a hundred years old. Strange... for two reasons. On the one hand it is hard to picture him as a centenarian, on the other it seems natural that he should always have existed, and impossible to imagine a world without him. However, bibliographical exactitude has it that he was born on the same day as an Italian weekly entitled the *Giornale per i Bambini* ("Children's Newspaper") edited by Fernando Martini, the first issue of which appeared in Rome on 7 July 1881 and contained the opening episode of "The Story of a Marionette", by Carlo Collodi.

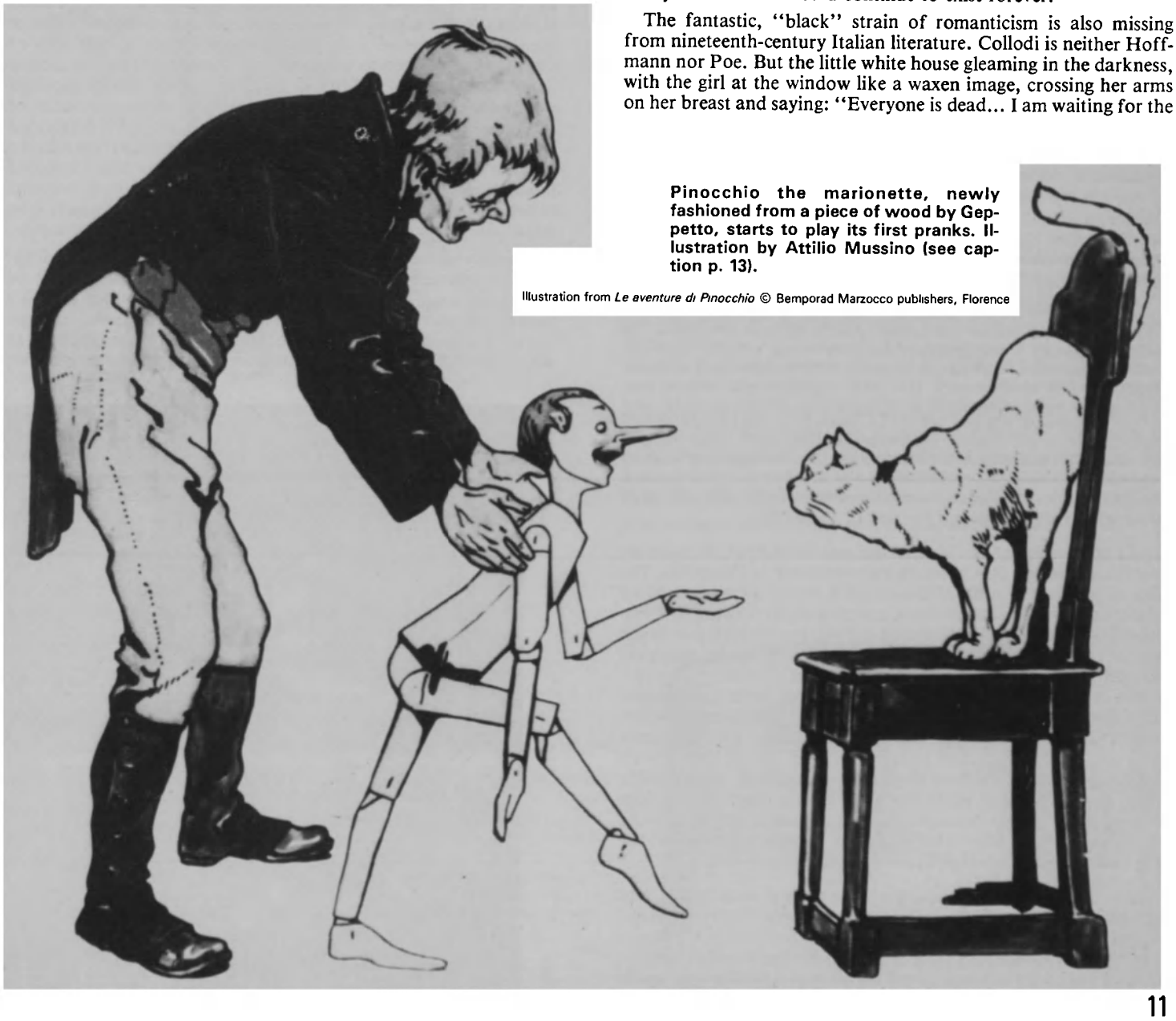
Today, a hundred years later, Pinocchio is world famous. His story has been told in many languages. He has displayed a talent for surviving intact changes of taste, fashion, linguistic expression and habits. Never for a moment has he been forgotten or banished to obscurity (and this in a field as subject to the wear-and-tear of passing time as children's literature). He has won a vast and ever-widening circle of unconditional admirers among authors and critics of "adult" literature, and the number of works devoted to "Pinocchiology" has swelled accordingly.

Is there anything in Pinocchio's progress to prevent us from hailing it as a triumphal one? Just this: although in the course of the last century *Pinocchio* has achieved the status of a classic in our literary history, it is that of a minor classic. Now the time has come to affirm that *Pinocchio* should be considered as one of the great books of Italian literature, which would without it be incomplete in certain essential respects.

I shall cite three of these gaps. First of all, the picaresque novel is a genre which does not exist in Italian literature (with the possible exception of the *Autobiography* of Benvenuto Cellini and, of course, a handful of tales from the *Decameron)*. In *Pinocchio*, a book of vagabondage and hunger, of seedy inns, hirelings and gibbets, the atmosphere and rhythm of Italian picaresque are created with such authority and vividness that one might think that it had always existed and would continue to exist forever.

The fantastic, "black" strain of romanticism is also missing from nineteenth-century Italian literature. Collodi is neither Hoffmann nor Poe. But the little white house gleaming in the darkness, with the girl at the window like a waxen image, crossing her arms on her breast and saying: "Everyone is dead... I am waiting for the ▶

ITALO CALVINO, *is a major 20th-century Italian novelist whose fiction has been translated into many languages. His published works include:* Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno *(1947; Eng. trans.* The Path to the Nest of Spiders, *1957);* Il barone rampante *(1957;* The Baron in the Trees, *1959); and* Il visconte dimezzato *(1952) and* Il cavaliere inesistente *(1959) which both appeared in English in* The Nonexistent Knight and the Cloven Viscount *(1962). He is also the author of a children's book,* Historias de Marcobaldo. *His latest novel to be published in English is* If on a Winter's Night a Traveller.



Pinocchio the marionette, newly fashioned from a piece of wood by Geppetto, starts to play its first pranks. Illustration by Attilio Mussino (see caption p. 13).

Illustration from *Le aventure di Pinocchio* © Bemporad Marzocco publishers, Florence

▶coffin to carry me off" would certainly have appealed to Poe. And Hoffmann would surely have relished the scene of the "Butterman" driving his carriage through the night, its wheels wrapped with straw and rags, drawn by twelve pairs of young donkeys wearing tiny boots... Each scene is presented with such visual force that it is unforgettable: black rabbits bearing a coffin, assassins hooded in coal sacks, scuttling along on tiptoe...

We do not know what reading nourished Collodi's penchant for such romantic imagery and the constant whirl of metamorphosis (quite unlike that in the fairy tales of Perrault, which Collodi had translated). I do not think he could have known the extraordinary German story-tellers of the first half of the nineteenth century, but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that he may have read a French writer of the same pedigree, the Charles Nodier of *La Fée aux Miettes.*

This story of initiation, the hero of which is a young carpenter protected by an omnipotent fairy who is at one and the same time a down-at-heels dwarf and the stunningly beautiful Queen of Sheba, has certain themes in common with *Pinocchio*, but it goes without saying that Collodi's powers of invention are far richer, lighter and more unpredictable.

Thirdly, Pinocchio is one of those rare prose works in which the quality of the writing is so high that each word remains engraved on the memory, as if it were poetry, a distinction which it shares in nineteenth-century Italian literature only with Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* and certain Dialogues of Leopardi. (This quality is equally rare in other literatures, I believe; in France it does not appear until Flaubert). In *Pinocchio* one might say that this effect is due to a natural felicity of expression, to an instinctive refusal to let through a dull, lifeless or abstract sentence, rather than any striving for stylistic artifice. Above all, there is the dialogue: *Pinocchio* marks the appearance in our literature of the novel entirely articulated around dialogue.

The secret of this book in which nothing seems contrived, in which the plot unfolds by weekly instalments (with various interruptions, one of which, the hanging of Pinocchio, is seemingly definitive—but how could the story possibly have ended there?) lies in the inner needs of its rhythm, of its syntax of images and metamorphoses which determine how the episodes follow each other in a dynamic flow.

Hence the fertilizing power of *Pinocchio*, at least as I have experienced it, for ever since I began to write I have looked on it as a model for the narration of adventures. But I believe that its influence, which all writers in Italian have felt, whether consciously or (more often than not) unconsciously, ought to be studied, since *Pinocchio* is the first book which they all come to after (if not before) learning the alphabet.

Hence too, another characteristic of the book, the way in which the reader is continually invited to participate by analysing and commenting, by dismantling and reassembling—activities which are always useful as long as they are undertaken in a spirit of respect for the text.

In 1980 a symposium was held in Pescia, Italy, on the symbolism of Pinocchio. It provided a golden opportunity to confirm what had long been common knowledge—that the little marionette takes a mischievous delight in unchaining the demon of interpretation, and that this demon has an irresistible propensity to take control of those who wish to expound the text of *Pinocchio*.

The centrepiece of the symposium was *Ecce Puer,* an essay by Gian Luca Pierotti on Christological symbolism in *Pinocchio*. The idea of reading the story of this putative son of a carpenter as an allegory on the life of Jesus is not new; it was put forward by Piero Bargelini in a book which appeared in 1942. But Pierotti goes much further than his predecessor. He refers not only to the canonical Gospels but to the Apocrypha (in which the childhood of a turbulent or frankly delinquent Jesus plays a large part); to traditions and legends (such as those relating to the symbolism of wood: Joseph's staff, the rod of Jesse, the tree of Eden which becomes the wood of the cross, the Christmas tree); to certain little-known aspects of folklore (such as the sacred marionette performances which were still held in Florence during Lent at the end of the last century); to popular iconography (hand-painted images of the Madonna, with the blue of her coat running over into her hair; the slug as an emblem of virginity).

The inference is that each of the human and animal figures, like each of the objects and situations in the story of Pinocchio, has a pendant in the Gospels, and vice versa. There is even a circumcision (when Pinocchio's nose is pecked by the woodpeckers), a baptism (when the old man in the nightcap pours a bowl of water

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over Pinocchio's head), and a Last Supper (at the Inn of the Red Lobster). Herod is Fire-Eater the puppeteer; even Pinocchio's cap made of bread has a eucharistic significance.

A more skilful display of prestidigitation it would be hard to imagine. The profusion of unexpected correspondences which Pierotti plucks from his expositor's hat is astonishing, even if, in order to construct a narrative scheme which corresponds to the story of Christ, he is obliged to postulate that *Pinocchio* tells the Gospel story three times over, different each time—with various gaps and unorthodox additions—and by continually modifying the rules of the game. The main thing is that the whole operation is performed with the humour and finesse (which Pierotti fortunately possesses) necessary to resist the temptation to demonstrate that Collodi is linked directly to the same vein of inspiration as the evangelists (whether there were four of them or more), or that he is seeking to tell an edifying story, or that he is the echo of a Gnostic tradition.

The only possible conclusion is that the imagination of a civilization is composed of a given number of characters which can be organized in many ways—but not in every way—so that two successful stories are bound to have many points in common. This being so, it is possible to try to make the same kind of rapprochement with other figures, as other contributors to the symposium did with

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varying degrees of success: between Pinocchio and Dante; between Pinocchio and neo-Platonism; between Pinocchio and Tantrism; and between the Lovely Maiden with Azure Hair and Isis. Naturally, psychoanalytical symbolism was also in evidence at the symposium, not only in the most obvious equivalences (the nose which grows guiltily longer) but also in the conflict between nature and culture—the opposition between maternal-vegetal nature and culture as the super-ego embodied by the talking cricket, or as the Jungian archetypes of the *Senex-Puer* conflict and the Great Conciliating Mother and the unconscious.

The great absentee in all this is Collodi himself. It is as if the book had been born of itself, just as its hero was born of a piece of wood, but without a Geppetto to hone it down. How did the idea of writing *Pinocchio* come to him?... The rest of his output does ▶

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In the illustrations which he produced for a 1911 edition of Carlo Collodi's classic *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Attilio Mussino created a portrait of the famous wooden marionette which became definitive. He was the first illustrator of Collodi's work to employ colour, taking great care to use tones which reflected the spirit of each chapter and illustrating each stage in the story according to a technique which has affinities with that of the modern comic strip. He also abandoned the more or less faithful realism of earlier illustrators and instead drew the characters in the story as caricatures, archetypes of different social classes, professions and offices. Whenever the Florence publishing house of Bemporad published a new edition of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Mussino was commissioned to do the illustrations, and over a period of 35 years he produced hundreds of Pinocchio drawings. To illustrate Italo Calvino's article we have chosen 7 of Mussino's 1911 illustrations in a sequence which runs from page 11 to the top of page 14.

(1) "Pinocchio eats sugar, but refuses to take medicine. But when he sees the undertakers coming for him, he drinks the medicine and feels better. Afterwards he tells a lie and, in punishment, his nose grows longer and longer." (2) Detail from "The Land of Toys." (3) "After five months of play, Pinocchio wakes up one fine morning and finds a great surprise awaiting him. Pinocchio's ears become like those of a Donkey. In a little while he changes into a real Donkey and begins to bray." (4) "Pinocchio is thrown into the sea, eaten by fishes, and becomes a Marionette once more. As he swims to land, he is swallowed by the Terrible Shark." (5) "In the Shark's body, Pinocchio began to walk toward the faint light which glowed in the distance... He found a little table set for dinner and lighted by a candle stuck in a glass bottle; and near the table sat a little old man, white as snow, eating live fish."

Illustrations from *Le aventure di Pinocchio* © Bemporad Marzocco publishers, Florence

Texts from *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, translated by Carol Della Chiesa, Macmillan, New York 1963

5

▶not stand comparison with his masterpiece, not even the imitation he produced in *Pipi, la Scimiottino Color di Rosa* (a kind of Pinocchio in reverse who refuses to become a man), although part of it (that concerning the brigand Golasecca) is worthy of the best passages of *Pinocchio* and deserves attention from all *Pinocchio* fans.

But is it not the ultimate fate of all masterpieces, or many of them at least, to transcend their author as if he were simply an intermediary or an instrument, and to impose their own existence and needs independently of him? Writing of *Pinocchio*, that most paradoxical of Italian authors, Giorgio Manganelli, concludes that its author did not exist (or at least that it is impossible to prove that he existed) and affirms: "from a scientific viewpoint, the hypothesis of the author's existence is superfluous".

And so it is quite right that we should have celebrated the centenary of Pinocchio's birth in 1981, that we should be preparing to celebrate next year his appearance in a book (1883), and that in eight years time (the centenary of the death of Paolo Lorenzini* in 1890) we should return to the question of whether or not Carlo Collodi ever actually existed.

* The real name of Carlo Collodi.

■ **Italo Calvino**

Drawing Roland Topor © Olivetti, Milan

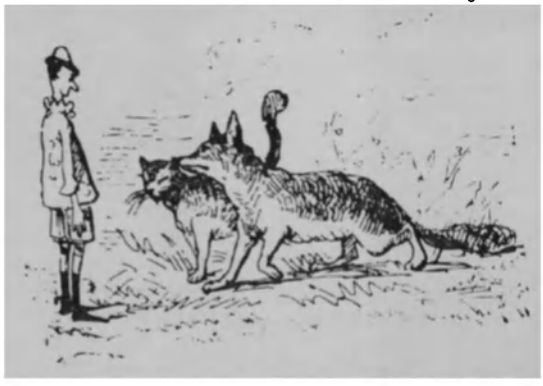
In 1972 the French painter, cartoonist, novelist and film-maker Roland Topor drew a series of highly symbolic, almost nightmarish illustrations for *Pinocchio* in which he presented a kind of psychoanalytical interpretation of the wooden marionette. "I adore Pinocchio", Topor has said. "He is the only literary figure who is of our time, modern, authentic."

Illustration from *Le aventure di Pinocchio* © Bemporad Marzocco publishers, Florence

"I wonder where the old Pinocchio of wood has hidden himself?" — "There he is", answered Geppetto. And he pointed to a large marionette leaning against a chair, head turned to one side, arms hanging limp and legs twisted under him.

Pinocchio as drawn by an 11-year-old Italian boy, Walter Pesaresi.

Drawing © Scuola Media Statale, Rome



Enrico Mazzanti, born in Florence in 1852, was the first illustrator of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. Left, one of the 62 illustrations Mazzanti drew when Collodi's work was published in book form in 1883.

Illustration from *Pinocchio e la sua immagine*
© Bemporad Marzocco publishers, Florence

HUCKLEBERRY FINN
AN EPIC OF SELF-DISCOVERY

by Malcolm Bradbury

Drawing E W. Kemble, from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* © Dodd and Mead, New York

"I guessed I wouldn't stay in one place, but just tramp right across the country, mostly night-times, and hunt and fish to keep alive."

IT has often been said that many of the greatest American novels are really, in the end, boys' books: James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales, Herman Melville's great sea-tale *Moby Dick,* Stephen Crane's story of a young man in war, *The Red Badge of Courage,* even Ernest Hemingway's battle stories or J.D. Salinger's painful but comic exploration of adolescent crisis, *The Catcher in the Rye.* Many American novels have been stories of adventure rather than explorations of society, and this no doubt helps to bring them closer to young people; so, too, does that famous spirit of innocence that runs through so much American writing.

However, few of these books are really about the experience and the mythology of childhood, its real dreams and anxieties. But there is one that is; there is little doubt that, of all the great American novels, none comes closer to being truly a children's book than Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

Yet Twain's story of two people, a white boy and an adult black slave, floating adventurously on a raft down North America's central river, the Mississippi, to get away from the tangles of adult society in which they have become trapped, has long been seen not just as a classic story for children but as a fundamental human myth. T.S Eliot once called Huck Finn "one of the great permanent symbolic figures of fiction, not unworthy to take a place with Ulysses, Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Hamlet and other discoveries which man has made about himself." Ernest Hemingway identified the book as the true starting place of modern American literature, the place from which all other books begin.

Whether Mark Twain consciously understood the potential of the story he was telling is very doubtful. He began the book as a sequel to an earlier children's story, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* and, as Huck tells us in his own voice at the beginning, "You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer;* but that ain't no matter." *Tom Sawyer* is a fine children's book, and is still widely read today. But *Huckleberry Finn* is a great one, a work both of lasting human weight and genuine originality.

Ask a child what it is that makes this such a remarkable children's book, and you will probably be told that it is the book's celebration of Huck Finn's freedom and independence. Huck does not have to go to school, or accept the rules of daily life; he seems able to determine where he wants to go and he chooses to act by his own standards. Bored with "living in a house all the time," tired of being "sivilized" by the Widow Douglas, threatened by the return of his brutal father, he takes to the river to secure his own fortunes.

His adventures on the floating raft and off it, on the riverbank, are spectacular, somewhere between play and serious living; he travels through the middle of his country and discovers its places and spaces. His life on the raft protects him, and gives him a continuous means of escape; he moves with nature and in nature's world. The river as a moving and powerful force bears him on, initiates him into endless new experience; he begins a quest that might go on for ever. He comes to enjoy and learn from the simple things which are nonetheless the essentials of life. And above all he tells his own story, speaks always in his own voice, and judges things in his own way.

Many readers have celebrated Huck's spirit of freedom and his role as the natural boy who is growing into the natural man, and found in it a fundamental western and American myth. It is the myth of the self-created person growing up beyond the limits of society in innocence and wonder. Out of the world of nature come conscience and understanding, nowhere more so than when ▶

MALCOLM BRADBURY *is professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia, Norwich (UK). He is the author of many books of criticism, including forthcoming studies of* Saul Bellow *and* The Modern American Novel. *He is also a novelist whose most recent published work,* The History Man, *appeared in 1975. His latest novel,* Rates of Exchange, *will be published shortly.*

▶Huck realizes that his companion on the raft, Nigger Jim, who will be returned to slavery if he is recaptured, is entitled to freedom too.

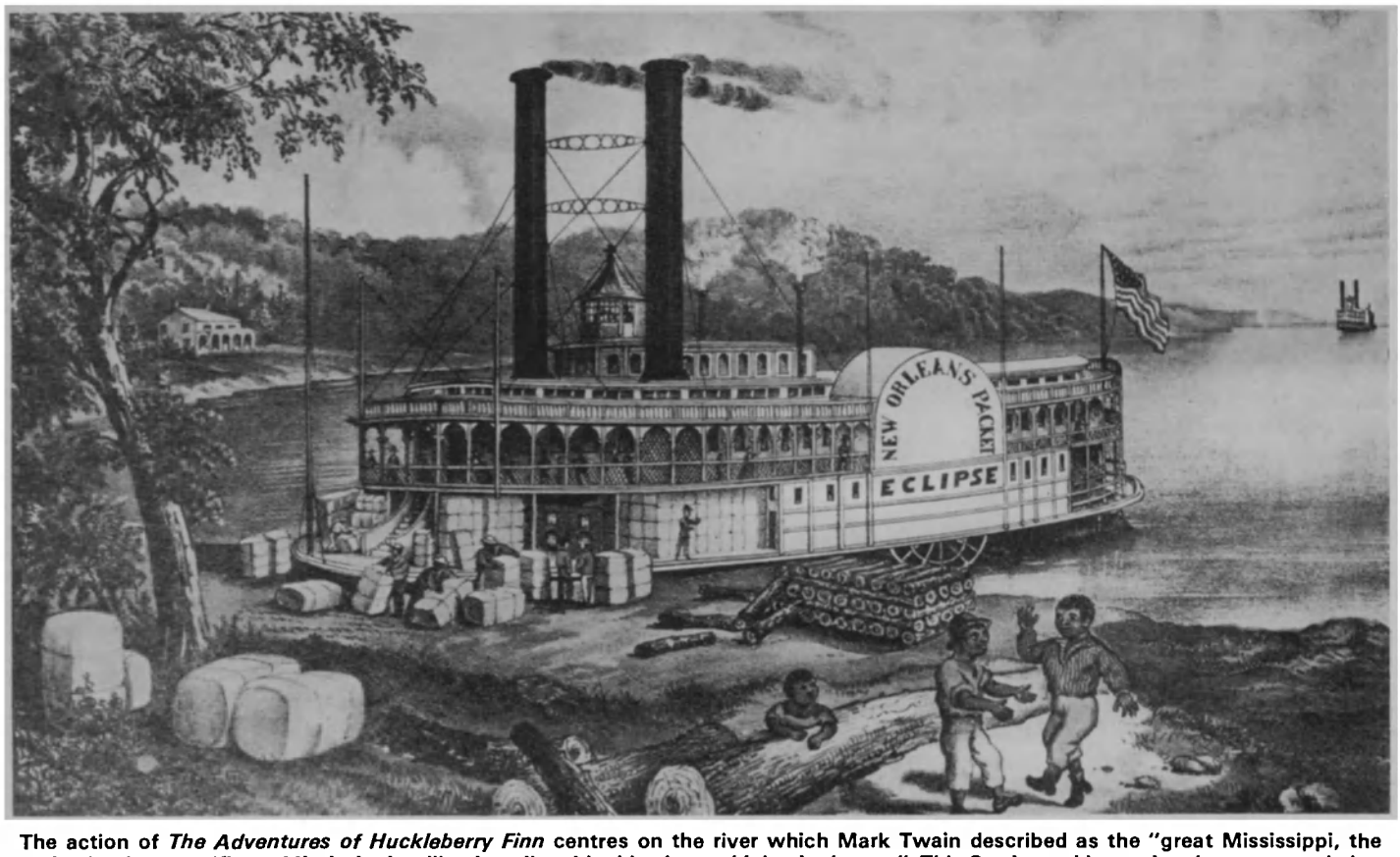
Yet Huck's story is not one of a total and innocent freedom, rather of a painful growing up: even his play moves into agonizing discovery. Huck's adventures are often flamboyant, but they involve not just comic excitement but a struggle with the complex society around him on the one hand, and his own conscience and nature on the other. His journey begins with the escape from the brutality of his father, but also involves the discovery of his father's mortality. And it moves through dangers that are not just outside Huck but within him, as he realizes the complexity of his own conscience and also realizes that, in wanting Nigger Jim's freedom, he could go to Hell. If society is often unkind, so is nature; and the river itself is threat as well as promise.

Huckleberry Finn is a novel about the river as a great but dangerous god, but it is also a social river. It is America's main artery, in the years when the book is set, before the American Civil War. The very direction of its flow is ironic, for the raft floating downstream is drifting away from the free states, where slavery was abolished, to the slave states, where Nigger Jim is in fact in greater danger.

Mark Twain realized this irony as he wrote the book, and considered diverting his raft up the Ohio River. But it is part of the book's honesty, and its sense of growing depth, that he did not. Bringing his story closer to slavery, Twain took his theme of freedom closer to complexity. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* was set in the lasting playtime of childhood. This, its sequel, is a book in which its simpler yet far deeper hero begins to grow up. When Tom Sawyer appears at the end of *Huckleberry Finn*, bringing childish adventures with him, we grow

Illustration of an episode from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* shows Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn and Joe Harper during their pirate expedition. "It seemed glorious sport to be feasting in that wild free way in the virgin forest of an unexplored and uninhabited island, far from the haunts of men, and they said they never would return to civilization. The climbing fire lit up their faces and threw its ruddy glare upon the pillared tree trunks of their forest temple, and upon the varnished foliage and festooning vines."

Drawing Worth Brehm, from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Harper and Brothers, New York



The action of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* centres on the river which Mark Twain described as the "great Mississippi, the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along, shining in the sun". This Currier and Ives print shows cotton being loaded onto a steamboat of the kind Huck and the fugitive slave Jim might have seen as they floated downstream. Mark Twain's own house in Hartford, Connecticut, was built to resemble a Mississippi steamboat.

Drawing © The Mansell Collection, London

impatient; Huck is now not a child at play, but a complex character.

One reason why we feel this is that Huck does tell the story in his own voice, and through his own vision. To take this simple and uneducated child from the American frontier, the boy who wants to get away from the house to smoke, and believes in ghosts and simple superstitions, and transform him into a voice of real experience was Mark Twain's greatest fictional triumph. His originality was to give a language built on vernacular and dialect, on instinct and childhood judgement, a total literary authority. It is a language that sets itself against that of those in authority, the language of those who are "sivilized" or utter stable moral truths; it is a voice of play and discovery.

We can feel Twain relaxing into it, not just because it is comic, though the novel is a classic of comedy, but because it has moral dignity. It was a release of the child in Twain himself, with all its sense of discovery, and all its openness and vulnerability. The relation of the child to the adult, the child expectant and enquiring, the adult fixed in social practices and impostures, is central to the book. But it is the child's voice, unable to take as truth the "blather" and social pretension and hostility, that counts. "If I never learnt nothing else out of Pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way," Huck says. But he has his own way too, the voice of his own self-reliant wisdom.

At the end of the novel, with Huck Finn's complicated adventures down the river over, and Nigger Jim set free, Huck's ideal of escape and freedom is expressed again: "...I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally, she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before."

The territory is the frontier to the West, where Tom Sawyer wants to "go for howling adventures amongst the Indians," but it is also another open space of nature in which Huck's dream of flight and escape might be again fulfilled. It has been rightly thought a very American ending, celebrating the free-standing ideal of the American frontier, the dream of a good world beyond society, "sivilization," and, indeed, women, a place of new brotherhood. But the flight is a familiar one in children's books everywhere: the idea of a new world, a fresh island, where old responsibilities derived from the world of adults can be set aside and a new life of self-sufficient adventure begun in nature is one of the lasting myths of children's fiction. Huck's raft, like Jim Hawkins' island, in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island,* is a place as much of danger as of escape. No doubt Huck's territory, if not too much spoiled by Tom Sawyer's "howling adventures," would be the same.

For *Huckleberry Finn* is not a novel of pure escape. It is a novel in which Huck flees in order to discover—to discover new places and spaces, the workings of nature and society, to discover himself, but above all to discover what he "can't stand." Like Holden Caulfield, in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (a book that clearly owes much to *Huckleberry Finn),* Huck protects enough of childhood to keep his innocence and seeks enough of adulthood to acquire judgement. Huck "lights out for the territory," and Holden Caulfield plunges into the big city world of New York to escape from his preparatory school and discover himself. Huck creates a child's Mississippi River, Holden an adolescent's New York. Both leave fixed places to discover changing ones, and both end up not only reinterpreting the adult world but by finding a language, a morally vigorous speech that makes the novels which tell their stories works not only of children's literature, but of serious literature everywhere.

■ **Malcolm Bradbury**

Old Man Dnieper

Photos right were taken during the filming of a Soviet TV production of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* which is astonishingly faithful to the spirit and detail of Mark Twain's novel. The three-hour film, directed by Stanislav Govorukhin, was shot on location with the banks of the Dnieper taking the place of the Mississippi valley. Above, after a meal of fish Tom and Huck stretch out in front of the fire and Huck lights up his pipe. Below, Tom and Huck watching a steamer on the "Mississippi".

Photo © Dmitri Kessel, Paris

Photo © Victor Victorovich Knutin, USSR

THE COMIC STRIP
BALLOONS AROUND THE WORLD

by Michel Pierre

'BASICALLY, you know," General de Gaulle once remarked to André Malraux, "Tintin is my only rival on the international scene. This joking admission by the French President of the comic strip hero's universal scope and appeal gave, as it were, "political" consecration to Tintin, the little newspaper reporter invented in 1929 by the Belgian artist Hergé (a pseudonym made up of the initials of his real name, Remi, Georges) and whose adventures cover half a century of contemporary history.

Today cartoon strip heroes continue to fascinate tens of millions of readers throughout the world. A product of the mass communications era, they are the modern counterparts of the heroes of folktales and adventure stories.

Comics, a synthesis of writing and drawings of the most diverse kind, on the border between literature and film where text and image interpenetrate, have given rise to an art form that holds great appeal for the younger generation. But while the child's imagination has little difficulty in penetrating into the universe of comics, adults, unused to this medium, find it difficult to decipher. And this difference in approach often gives rise to misunderstanding.

Though the comic strip owes its development to modern printing and distribution methods, it is rooted in an old tradition. In Europe, its origins can be traced back to the images d'Epinal *in France and to the picture stories of the German Wilhelm Busch (1832-1908) and the Swiss Rodolphe Topffer (1799-1846).*

In Japan, the comic's early ninth century ancestors, the Choju-Guiga Emakimono *(stories on scrolls of paper), were a mixture of war reporting, philosophical legends and scenes from everyday life.* Lian huan hua *(little illustrated books) existed even in ancient China. From the 1920s onwards they developed considerably and, after 1939, they began to report on aspects of contemporary China, as well as adapting in picture form the most famous Chinese novels, such as* The Monkey King Sun Wukong *(see page 28)* *and* The Three Kingdoms, *using time-honoured drawing techniques. Africa also turned to its sources in producing picture versions of ancient legends such as* The Adventures of Leuk the Hare, *after a text written by Léopold Sédar Senghor.*

But it was in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century that the strip cartoon was created in its modern form. Increasingly sophisticated techniques made it possible to integrate text and images in which the various characters expressed themselves in "bubbles" or "balloons".

Early comic strips like The Katzenjammer Kids, *which first appeared in 1897, met with immediate success and were the forerunners of dozens of popular heroes including Mickey Mouse (1929) and* Peanuts *(1950) to cite some of the most universally known.*

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22 只見那老虎把前爪在地上一按，从半空里直攛过来。武松被这一吓，酒早已醒了六、七分，忙一閃，閃在老虎背后。

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MICHEL PIERRE, *of France, is a staff member of the college of education of the Essonne (France) and a book editor with Unesco and with the French publishing house Études Vivantes. He is the author of* La Bande Dessinée *(The Comic Strip) and a regular contributor to the French magazines* A Suivre *and* Magazine Littéraire.

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ÉLOIGNEZ-VOUS DES FENETRES!
ZZZIP!.. LA FLECHE GARNIE D'ÉTOUPE ENFLAMMÉE VINT SE FICHER À QUELQUES POUCES DE L'INSAISISSABLE INTERROMPANT SON RÉCIT.

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Europe has given birth to a specific style of comics, thanks in particular to the productions of the Belgian school with its well-constructed plots, fearless heroes and strikingly simple drawing techniques. Latin America has also developed an original style, especially Argentina where such artists as Quino (the creator of Mafalda, *in 1964), Oski, Mordillo, Munoz and Sampayo all produce comics.*

One must also mention the work of artists from Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Finland, Algeria and Angola who testify to the vitality of the medium in all parts of the globe.

It often happens that a character in a cartoon created in a specific culture and designed for a certain audience takes on a new significance in another context. For example, Corto Maltese, *created by the Italian Hugo Pratt for Italian and French magazines, was adopted by the Angolan freedom fighters who saw in the thoughts and deeds of this left-wing adventurer a reflection of their own struggle and preoccupations.*

Comics can also provide a means of communication between civilizations and cultures. This was the case when Nasrudin Hodja, the legendary hero of Muslim humour, became the hero of a French strip cartoon published by the children's weekly Vaillant, *in 1955.*

Thanks to the immense popularity it has acquired with young readers, the comic strip is gradually establishing its position among the contemporary communication media. It is sometimes lauded excessively, but more often unjustly criticized. It now remains for it to convince the last critics and win the final battle.

■ **Michel Pierre**

1. Drawing from ***The Cry that Kills*** © Atoss Takemoto, Matsuda, Japan
2. Waterside Yarns or The Marsh Outlaws and the Lion Inn. Drawing © Publications Orientalistes de France, Paris
3. Mafalda's Gang. Drawing © Quino
4. Corto Maltese, The Ethiopics. Drawing Hugo Pratt © Casterman, Paris
5. Leuk the Hare. Illustration G. Lorofi © Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1975, Dakar and Abidjan
6. Nasdine Hodja. Drawing © P. Leguen, R. Lecureux.
7. Snoopy. Drawing Schulz © 1982 United Features Syndicate Inc.
8. Tintin et L'Ile Noire. Drawing Hergé © Casterman, Paris
9. Mickey and the Mysterious Island. Drawing © Walt Disney Productions. By special permission of Walf Disney Productions (France).

LATIN AMERICA:
TALL STORIES FOR SMALL READERS

by Jorge Enrique Adoum

The Black Corsair (in background at right) attacks one of "the great Spanish galleons which brought to Europe the treasures of central America, Mexico and the equatorial region". This illustration by G. Gamba appeared in an Italian edition, published in 1921, of Emilio Salgari's *Il Corsaro Nero*.

"THEY took the gold and left us the words," said the Nobel Prizewinning Chilean poet Pablo Neruda of the Iberian conquistadors. Since, with the exception of Paraguay, we have never been bilingual, and since our indigenous languages have not been transcribed, we in Latin America learn to read in the languages of those "words" even the sacred texts of the Quiche Maya: the *Popol Vuh,* the *Book of Chilam-Balam,* and the *Annals of the Cakchiqueles.*

The language of the conquistadors thus became the only official language, the language of administration and justice, of education and writing. Even today our indigenous populations live in a situation which modern Latin American sociologists have called "internal colonialism". In order to exercise their rights as citizens they must learn to read and write in "the language of the whites": universal suffrage exists in few countries, and even there it is a recent innovation. Those of our compatriots who are the victims of such discrimination must speak or at least understand our Spanish (or Portuguese in Brazil) when they need to communicate with us, while we do not make the slightest effort to understand Quechua, Aymara and other indigenous languages, or those African languages which have been transplanted to America.

The cultural colonialization initiated by colonialization pure and simple goes on. In some countries a newly emergent national conscience has begun to collect and preserve in writing indigenous traditions and legends, the mythology and signs which abound in the dreams and languages of our Indians and Blacks, but so far these works possess more anthropological than literary interest. And so, whatever our ethnic origin or ideology, all those of us today who practice the terrorism of an official language and culture originating in Europe are "colonizers". In a word, all those of us who went to school.

But it was precisely at school—long before we realized that we were becoming the willing or unwilling accomplices of this vast discriminatory operation—that we became aware that we were ourselves enduring the "perpetual dictatorship" of the hydra-headed adult: parents, teachers, confessors, traffic policemen, shopkeepers, bystanders. They knew what was right for us, what we ought to say and do; they knew what we wanted better than we did ourselves. And at home our parents, as well as giving us the food they liked and ordaining the bedtime that suited them, imposed on us their favourite stories which were probably, we suspect, the only ones they knew.

When we reached a certain age we had had our fill of these "children's stories"(1), perhaps because we were tired of their message and had had no desire to be innocent, diligent, or submissive; we had lost interest in stories in which, Tom Thumb excepted, the heroine was always a girl who had been or would be one day, a princess ("girls' things" we called them, even though later on we should feel something akin to love for Andersen's little mermaid), nor did we want to be the prince whose appearance, albeit decisive, comes only at the end of the story. We boys wanted to escape from an authoritarian, dictatorial, restrictive reality which did not even leave us the right to dream. Alice (in a book which we stupidly refused to read at that time, for the same reason) had only to open her eyes for all to change to reality, but in our case closing our eyes was not enough to provide escape from reality, from the clutches of the ubiquitous, omnipotent adult, whose omniscience asphyxiated us. And our first rebellion against this other form of colonialism lay in reading: as soon as we could read for

JORGE ENRIQUE ADOUM, *Ecuadorian poet and writer, is the author of some ten books of poetry, a novel, two plays and many essays. He is currently a member of the editorial staff of the* Unesco Courier.

(1) See "The Sting in the Fairy Tale", *Unesco Courier,* January 1979.

Photo © Roger Viollet, Paris

In Jules Verne's novel *The Children of Captain Grant*, Mary and Robert Grant embark on the *Duncan* in search of their father whom they eventually find, after many adventures on land and sea, on an island near New Zealand. Left, an incident from the story which with *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* and *The Mysterious Island* belongs to Verne's series of novels with a nautical setting. This illustration, by the French artist Edouard Riou, appeared in the first edition, published in 1867-8.

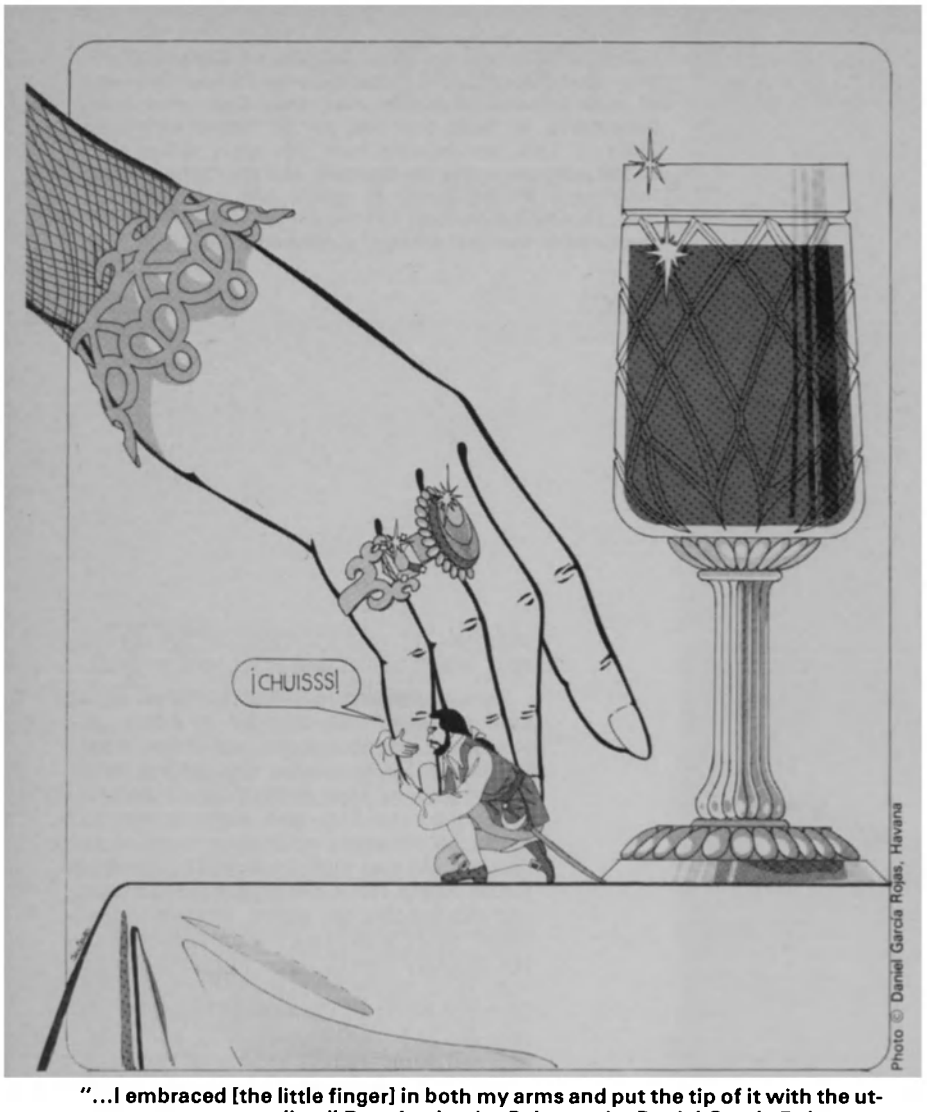
ourselves, we read those books "for grown-ups" which adults had never read to us(2).

To compensate for what appeared as a kind of *immanent injustice* at home, at school, in neighbourhood and town, what we looked for in reading was getting away from home, as Tom Sawyer did, bringing a little order to life, and righting wrongs (although we would never have dared to go to a cemetery at night as he did) like some junior Robin Hood defending the innocent and denouncing the guilty. But we "identified" more with Mark Twain's other hero, Huckleberry Finn (in order to be like him we even tried vainly to make a corncob pipe from the husks of the cooked maize we ate each day at home), because of his authoritarian and unjust father, because of the society he abandoned and which rejected him, because of his adventure in the treasure cave (Ali Baba on the Mississippi) and his voyage on the raft; we also suffered with ▶

(2) Books came from Spain, such as the *Tales* published in Spanish by the house of Calleja in a format no bigger than a cigarette packet and which were easy to read surreptitiously, and the books from the publishing house of Sopena, which were later also published in Argentina. In 1889 José Martí created in New York the magazine *La Edad de Oro* ("The Golden Age") "A monthly publication of recreation and instruction for the children of America". Four issues were actually published which Cuban children have been able to read in many later editions, but they contained more instruction than recreation. The most important Latin American author of children's books, Monteiro Lobato, founded in 1918 Brazil's first publishing house (before then books came from Portugal). He created figures well-known to all Brazilian readers, such as Emilia, a talking rag doll obsessed with correcting the errors of Nature, Doña Benta who accepts that children's creative imagination changes reality, and Tía Nastasia (Aunt Anastasia) who sees sin and evil in everything she does not know, and the Viscount of Sabugos, an adult who only believes what is written in books.

Photo © Giraudon, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

The Three Musketeers, Athos, Porthos and Aramis, as depicted with their inseparable companion D'Artagnan on the opening page of the 1846 edition of Alexandre Dumas' novel.



"...I embraced [the little finger] in both my arms and put the tip of it with the utmost respect to my lips." Drawing by the Cuban artist Daniel García Rojas was produced for a recent edition of *Gulliver's Travels*. It illustrates an episode in Gulliver's second voyage, when he visits the island of Brobdingnag which is peopled by giants.

▶him the threat of an imminent and enforced return to school routine after his adventures on the great rivers of north America.

These exceptions apart, we hardly ever found any child or adolescent figures in our reading whose destiny we could share or appropriate for ourselves. Rudyard Kipling's characters did not command our loyalty. As far as Mowgli was concerned our opinions tended to vacillate rather than diverge. On the one hand we understood that men were "the chosen race", and this did not fail to reassure us when faced with the black panther and the yellow-eyed tiger; but at the same time we reproached him for a kind of ingratitude towards the animals which had saved him, fed him and welcomed him like the real king of the jungle, a precursor of Tarzan. And qualities which we detested also reappeared in these books: hierarchy, authority, the duty of obedience. Kim, on the other hand, we judged summarily and unconditionally as a traitor. It is not that we were particularly precocious or perspicacious; it was just that we had been studying the independence period at school and we knew that many descendants of Spaniards born in America had instigated and fought in the wars of independence, so that we could not justify Kim's activities as a secret agent in an army foreign to the country of his birth, except by what our teacher called "links of blood". As for Collodi's *Pinocchio,* a book we had been led to read after seeing a film, we were already sufficiently steeped in lying to know that your nose did not grow if you told lies, and with the aplomb of the guilty we were not unduly disturbed by the "Talking Cricket" of the conscience. On the other hand, we relished the bravado with which Pinocchio lived the life of a dissipated adult, even though this was not our greatest ambition.

Perhaps we admired our adult "models" —adventurers, corsairs, pirates and sailors—because Adventure with a capital A had to take place at sea. We had to put distance—oceans—between us and injustice which, because we had not travelled, seemed to us purely local.

Our first heroes, in both senses of the word, were the characters of the Italian Emilio Salgari: Sandokan (the name itself rings like an epic) the Malay corsair who fought against the British colonial authorities, the Black Corsair and the Red Corsair who braved the Spanish governors of the Caribbean and who through a cruel quirk of fate fell in love with the daughter or niece of their worst enemy. From Guatemala to Uruguay, from Puerto Rico to Ecuador, we formed gangs—not minding which side we were on. (But we had no girls to play Yolanda, the daughter of the Black Corsair, who was Queen of the Caribbean).

The same thing happened when we played *The Three Musketeers*—only the first episode, since we all wanted to be d'Artagnan—with swords made for us by the local carpenter from pointed pieces of wood with cross-pieces for handles: there was never anyone to play Milady or Constance. For us boys, anyway, this was the least interesting side of the story.

Perhaps because of so much sea and so many islands; because of the vision of boarding parties and hand-to-hand fighting with pirates which kept us awake at nights; because of our envy of Robinson Crusoe who had managed to survive for twenty-eight years, two months and nineteen days on an island where no one could enforce their wishes on him; because of Gulliver's Travels (we did not venture further than the first voyage which made us realize the imbecility of war, and thus missed the second where the stupidities of the powerful are exposed, and the cornucopia of wonders in the third, with its flying island where talking is done with objects instead of words and where food has geometric shapes); because of the children of Captain Grant (at first Verne had bored us, perhaps because the journeys to the moon and to the centre of the earth were too much for us, but later on we came to love the enigmatic and contradictory Captain Nemo); because of the adventures of the Count of Monte Cristo with his hoard of treasure which would allow him that just revenge which seemed proportionately speaking similar to our own... for all these reasons, some of us left home and became, as destiny dictated, waiters, travelling salesmen, proof-readers and booksellers, until the day when each one found the place earmarked for him in society, as they say, through a kind of fatalistic spirit rather than any social determinism.

The thirst for justice and the great dream of adventure had waned in most cases into a "practical spirit", and although some still wished to transform life and the world, almost all became tradesmen, soldiers, employees of one kind or another, policemen, economists, informers, ambassadors or notaries.

Nor was the fate of our sisters and girl cousins more enviable: after dreaming of the Prince Charming who would deliver them from servitude, they now began to weep with Louisa M. Alcott's *Little Women* and then later—for such books were forbidden by the nuns at school—they thought they had the right to the same destiny in love as Madame Bovary or Eugénie Grandet (without the same end, obviously)... and ended up by making the best match their parents had been able to find for them or by yielding to the never very original declarations of the local Don Juan.

However, many of us had discovered, at home or elsewhere, a fabulous and boundless continent: that of literature. A few made their home there and continued to live there until today or until they died; others made only a fleeting visit: they got to know Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper, Jack London and Paul Feval, Eugène Sue, Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo, and maybe Saroyan and Salinger. And those who followed us discovered other, recent treasures: *Le Petit Prince, The Diary of Ann Frank...*

But I realize that I am writing in the past tense. Not because of nostalgia for a distant adolescence, nor because of the tenacious dream of liberty and justice, but because since then the boys have adopted an almost exclusive diet of picture books and comic strips and the girls read photo-novels—the kind of trivia churned out by a factory of sub-literature, in praise of wealth and even racism—which today appear regularly in magazines. And because, in other countries, adolescents of both sexes, caught in a difficult moment of their collective destiny, are themselves heroes of history and have no time to read stories with heroes, because, turning up noses already used to the smell of gunpowder, they rightly say to themselves that literature can wait.

■ **Jorge Enrique Adoum**

Drawing © Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco, Tokyo

This illustration for an African folk-tale, "Children of the Forest", was drawn by the Sudanese artist Abdulahi Mohd Eltaieb. It won a prize in the "Noma Concours for Children's Picture Book Illustrations '78", a competition organized by the Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco.

THE CHILD-HERO IN AFRICAN FOLKTALES

by Aminata Sow Fall

AMINATA SOW FALL, *of Senegal, is director of the department of literature and intellectual property in her country's ministry of culture. She is the author of two published novels,* Le Revenant *and* La Grève des Bàttu, *and of the forthcoming* L'Appel des Armes. *She is co-author of school textbooks on grammar, French literature, and theatrical expression.*

BEFORE describing the role of the child-hero in African folklore, it is well to recall briefly the place occupied by the folktale in the African universe. Although traditionally recounted by that multiple-part actor the story-teller, the folktale is essentially a group production and it provides an unrivalled medium for the transmission of African wisdom. It expresses the deepest aspirations of the community and ensures its cohesion by maintaining value systems and beliefs necessary for its equilibrium and survival. Failings are exposed and the marginal members of society are punished by man or by supernatural forces, according to their misdeeds. The lesson that emerges from the African ▶

Drawing © Foundation Books for Tanzania Library Services

One of the most popular children's books in Tanzania tells the story of a boy called Kiungandua who fought successfully in his tribe's war against European invaders. Eventually he is captured by the enemy but commits suicide to avoid disclosing the secrets of his group's successes. The book written in Kiswahili by H.A.K. Mwenegoha, is entitled *Shujaa wa Vijana* ("The Youths' Hero"). In this illustration Kiungandua is shown in conversation with a veteran warrior of his tribe.

folktale is a warning to anyone who might be tempted to stray away from the moral principles and religious concepts of the community.

In addition to its entertainment value, the folktale is therefore essentially didactic. With its capacity to reach beyond everyday reality into the realms of fantasy and the fantastic it offers wide scope for the child's imagination. It is also a means of developing the child's belief in supernatural phenomena and of initiating him into the metaphysics of myth and cosmogonic legend.

Concern for ethical teaching emerges particularly strongly in tales in which the hero is a child. According to the circumstances, the child-hero embodies either values that strengthen society or destructive counter-values. But he can also assume metaphysical dimensions which make him a saviour or the embodiment of the spirit of evil in all its absurdity.

The child-hero is thus a symbol and for this reason the same character can be given different names according to the geographic region concerned and the adaptations which the tale undergoes to suit ethnic particularities. The name is less important than the symbolism; often, in fact, the hero is simply called "the child".

There are three sorts of child-hero in African folklore: the model child, the boisterous child and the child of evil.

There are numerous versions of the tale of the model child. The child-hero is often an orphan girl, ill-treated by a wicked stepmother, who bullies and punishes her mercilessly and burdens her with painful, back-breaking tasks. Without any help from her weak, virtually non-existent father, the little orphan obeys all her cruel stepmother's whims and orders until the day when, exasperated by the girl's patience and forbearance, the wicked woman demands the impossible.

In Birago Diop's tale, *La Cuiller Sale* (The Dirty Spoon), little Cumba is ordered to go and wash a spoon in the "Daayaan" sea, which she can only reach by following paths used by wild animals and crossing a strange kingdom peopled by supernatural creatures. Thanks to her gentle good behaviour, she eludes all the traps and snares and returns with the washed spoon and great riches.

The stepmother, who never expected the orphan to come back alive, is surprised and very jealous. She decides to send her own daughter on an expedition to the "Daayaan" sea and starts preparing a magnificent reception for her return. But the girl dies, her body is eaten by the wild beasts of the forest and all that remains is her heart which a vulture drops in the calabash in which her mother is preparing couscous for the feast. A double punishment has thus been meted out—to the heartless stepmother and her insolent daughter.

All versions of the model child tales follow the same pattern. They provide models of behaviour and a lesson in patience, obedience, respect and discretion which enable a child to overcome the most difficult situations. So that the lesson should be properly understood, the model child in these tales is often opposed to his negative counterpart, the spoilt child. Thanks to this technique, all problems related to the child's education can be treated globally.

The model child inspires tenderness and admiration, while the spoilt child, who is rude and disrespectful, incurs only anger and the audience's approval for the terrible punishment which always overtakes him, sometimes along with innocent people. The spoilt child is shown as a social scourge and parents and the whole community are therefore advised to teach the basic moral virtues to their children.

In *Petit Mari,* one of the tales recorded by Birago Diop, a little girl's obstinacy drives her brother to suicide and her mother to madness, and engulfs all the other members of the family in catastrophe in the depths of the sea. These tales are not intended only for children; adults are also warned of the price to be paid for wickedness and injustice.

Frequent manifestations of providence stress the intangibility of the borderline between the real and unreal, the visible and invisible. In several tales the dead mother comes to the aid of her maltreated daughter. In *Le Pagne Noir* (The Black Loincloth), by Bernard Dadié, little Aiwa finally triumphs over her wicked stepmother by bringing back the shroud which her dead mother has given her instead of the black loincloth she has been told to wash white.

African folklore abounds in tales about unruly, mischievous and naughty children. Jabu, Ndaw and Samba-of-the-night (in *Les Nouveaux Contes d'Amadou Koumba)* and the "Little Terror" (in *Le Pagne Noir)* are a few examples of such children. The extraordinary circumstances surrounding the hero's birth and his extreme precociousness are characteristic features of these tales. In his mother's womb the child already presses her to give birth to him and from the very day he is born he speaks, gives himself a name and starts on his exploits. On the day of his birth the Little Terror traps a deer after having carried a meal to his father in the fields. On the second day he dips a panther in boiling water and on the third he puts to flight all the kings of the jungle.

Several versions of these tales recall episodes from Tom Thumb. The child-hero foils the witch's evil designs and saves his brothers or uncles by substituting the witch's own daughters for them. In this way, the witch, not realizing what she is doing, cuts her daughters' throats. All attempts at revenge fail for the child, who has hidden powers, always manages to outwit the sorceress.

Beliefs play an important role in these tales and strangeness is not considered out of place, as can be seen from this reply by a mother to her son who has just commanded his own birth: "As you have delivered yourself, you can also give yourself a name!" Nor does this strangeness stem merely from a taste for the supernatural and for extraordinary adventures fired by an imagination that transcends terrestrial limits. Here extraordinary phenomena

Drawing © Dramé. From *Contes et Légendes de Guinée,* Revolutionary People's Republic of Guinea

Taken from a book of popular tales and legends from Guinea, this drawing illustrates the story of the combat between the spider and the wasp. The spider often plays an important role in west African stories of the jungle, while the hare, seen here among the onlookers, figures largely in tales of the savannah.

Left, the cover of an edition of the *Tales of Amadou Koumba*, by the Senegalese writer Birago Diop, shows an African village where animals are endowed with human qualities. The illustration was drawn by a boy from Cameroun, Balbo Oussoumanou.

Photo Naud (c) A A A , Paris

Leuk the Hare, a character in a story by Léopold Sédar Senghor, as depicted by Françoise N'Thépé, a nine-year-old Camerounian girl.

are part and parcel of life, and the child, through the mystery of his conception and birth and his lack of speech during the first months of life, is held, in certain African societies, to be very close to invisible forces. It is not surprising therefore that the child should be central to such tales.

By his deeds and by the very nature of his unusual personality the unruly child disturbs the laws of nature, but he never deviates from the social ethic or from the community's basic beliefs. He is a saviour. He urges caution when warning his family of the evil designs of the witch who has disguised herself as a jujube tree laden with fruit or as a beautiful woman seeking a husband. And he pokes fun at the mighty by exposing their worst faults—greed, selfishness, and so on.

The character of the child of evil is more difficult to understand. All his actions are blameworthy. His parents often die when he is born or shortly afterwards, which suggests that he is the bearer of misfortune. He neglects the advice given by his father on his deathbed and he squanders the family fortune. Prompted by an unquenchable thirst for destruction, he returns evil for good and kills all those, whether men or animals, who have shown him kindness.

The existence of this type of hero in African folklore is no accident. It can be explained partly by a belief in the reincarnation of discontented ancestors who return to earth to wreak vengeance. The child of evil therefore "existed" long before his parents. As Samba-of-the-night declares:

"I am Samba, born last night
Older than my mother
Older than my father
The same age as
My younger brothers and sisters
Yet to be born."

The child of evil can also be perceived as an evil spirit, the son of the devil. According to popular belief, such children were unmasked by soothsayers, and, to ensure that they would not bring misfortune on to their family, they were deposited in the jungle at the foot of a tree so that they could return to their true realm.

Tales with child-heroes are not merely designed to satisfy the child's need to escape into the world of dreams and fantasy. They embody the hopes, fears and fantasies of the entire community.

■ **Aminata Sow Fall**

Drawing © Nazir Nabah, Damascus

GOHA THE SIMPLE OR THE WISDOM OF FOLLY

by Georgia Makhlouf

The Syrian artist Nazir Nabah drew this illustration of the story of the self-important Sultan who is convinced that the moon follows him wherever he goes.

WHEN I first heard about Goha the Wise Fool I was a little perplexed. He was not the usual hero of fairy-tales who saves nations or princesses in distress, nor the flat, one-dimensional character of stories that one laughs over but soon forgets.

He was different, indefinable—sometimes the judge, sometimes the accused, the robber or the robbed, the cheat or the cheated. I couldn't make up my mind if one should make fun at him or with him, sharing in his bizarre wisdom.

He had been described to me as a Lebanese peasant from a mountain village who has to face the various tribulations of country life. But I also met him in the guise of a judge in a Cairo court-room, as a guest of the sultan in the palaces of Baghdad, and on a shopping expedition in the *suqs* of the old city of Tunis.

But with all this, Goha remained true to character, ageless and always accompanied by his donkey who, whether friend or foe, sticks to him like a shadow.

Goha is to be found everywhere in Arab folklore. Unlike the typical characters in most traditional literatures who are assigned to a more or less set corpus of tales and therefore occupy a clearly defined position in the development of the plot, Goha is a versatile, fluctuating character whose deeds and words constantly change according to the circumstances. He is part and parcel of daily life and the comical adventures of which he is the eternal hero are continually updated to fit the socio-political conditions of the day.

GEORGIA MAKHLOUF, *of Lebanon, is currently preparing a university thesis in Paris on ideology in modern Lebanese children's literature. She has worked on a number of studies on the role of the mass media in Lebanon and has written children's stories in Arabic.*

This may explain why, despite his importance and omnipresence in the collective consciousness, few books have been written about Goha. He is not a static character automatically condemned to be eaten by the wolf like Little Red Riding Hood. When he meets the wolf there are always several alternatives: Goha misleads him about his destination, he leads him before the judge, offers him sweets... and even eats him!

His multi-faceted character holds great appeal for young audiences, probably because of his "anti-heroic" behaviour.

Goha is often shown as a lazy, poor, ignorant, dirty and dishonest individual living on the fringe of society, outside the social logic of work and productivity, but who manages nevertheless to disentangle himself from embarrassing situations through guile or simple wisdom.

Though ignorant, Goha exposes the contradictions of official scholarship; established, sacrosanct standards do not impress him. In an delightful scene in Jacques Baratier's film *Goha le Simple,* the scenario of which was written by the Lebanese writer Georges Shéhadé, Goha succeeds in setting at loggerheads two *ulemas* of the famous Al Azhar university. The first maintains that truth is straight, the second that it is curved; the first that truth is luminous, the second that it is obscure. With his simple approach, akin to that of a child who has not yet been warped by social constraints, Goha appears wiser and more knowledgeable than these learned scholars.

His relationship with his environment also reveals several traits that are characteristic of the child's universe. The way he falls under the spell of things and the ease with which he confronts Nature (very well described in Adès and Josipovici's *Goha),* in particular his relationship with his donkey, recall certain aspects of the child's animistic thought as identified by Piaget.

Goha has conversations with his donkey who is all at once at faithful companion, an enemy, a scapegoat and the mirror-image of himself. To critics he often replies: "I have lived so long with my donkey that I've become like him."

Goha is also an eternal truant. In Shéhadé's scenario he is sent to school by his father who hopes that his son will become a scholar at Al Azhar. But instead of attending the *madrassah* (Koranic school), Goha wiles away his days in the shadow of an arcade and sends his donkey to school in his place. Incidentally, the donkey is completely at ease among the dull and studious pupils.

When Goha himself becomes a schoolmaster he practises avant-garde teaching methods by getting his pupils to teach one another.

In yet another tale, set this time in a drawing class, he becomes an adept of modern art by depicting, instead of the bird the teacher has told the class to draw, the branch of a tree. When the time for the exercise is up, the teacher claps his hands for the pupils to raise their slates exhibiting their work. When he sees Goha's drawing he asks angrily: "Where's the bird?"

"It flew away when you clapped your hands", replies Goha.

This irreverent, non-conformist character, full of weaknesses and faults, who succeeds in extricating himself from difficult situations by inversing traditional values, is very popular with children. By his example Goha "shows that there are temporary solutions to the most pressing psychological difficulties" (Bettelheim). Thus he is often rewarded by the *Kadi* (judge) or the sultan for his resourcefulness. His cunning and shrewdness disarm his enemies and he receives presents for getting out of tight corners.

For a child there is something reassuring in the sight of little, unimportant Goha—who is definitely on the side of the poor and the weak—defending himself suc-

cessfully and triumphing over people who are stronger and much more powerful than himself.

Nevertheless, Goha is unlike the usual heroes of children's tales who are never ambivalent but, on the contrary, strongly polarized and form an opposition within the story. Because of his versatility and the variety of roles he plays, Goha cannot be classed in the usual category of children's characters.

In a historical study which attempts to answer the question: "Did Goha ever exist?", he is referred to as a *Mukhadram*. This term was used originally to qualify historical figures who lived both in pre-Islamic times and during the period of Islam's emergence, thus participating in two different cultural universes; its meaning has now been extended to describe someone who is astride two worlds, but does not belong completely to either, in other words, an ambiguous and therefore very versatile character.

In certain tribes the *mukhadram* is a mediator in inter-tribal disputes: he does not really belong to either tribe but is sufficiently familiar with both to serve as an intermediary between them.

Without seeking to ascribe validity to this historical theory (whether Goha ever existed or not remains an open question) it points to an important dimension of his personality: fundamentally he is a "marginal" character, who participates in different social worlds but never identifies with any of them completely. Both an adult and a child, he is not anti-social, for he maintains a complex network of social relationships; rather, he is an anarchist in spontaneous revolt against the prevailing social order which imposes its own vision of reality. In this respect Goha is essentially ambivalent.

His subversive instincts expressed in the struggle against oppression and brute force sometimes lend themselves to political interpretations. The story of "Goha's nail", for example, is so famous that it has become proverbial. Goha is obliged to sell his house, but he adds a clause to the contract under which he remains the owner of a nail on the wall of one of the rooms, and this clause is accepted by the buyer. One fine day Goha arrives at the house and hangs a decaying carcass on the nail. The whole house soon reeks with the smell. Goha is asked to remove the carcass but refuses pointing out that the nail is legally his property. The new owner is appalled and finally has to abandon the house to Goha.

When Goha's nail is mentioned today in conversation it is taken to mean someone who keeps the best for himself while appearing to be disinterested, or it can allude to a clause introduced into a contract in order to thwart the beneficiary.

Another incident in the life and times of the inimitable Goha as drawn by a six-year-old Egyptian girl, Shainda Niazi Lane.

At the political level the story symbolizes the people's struggle against occupation. In a more recent tale about a water melon Goha is shown as a dissident. The scene is set during an election: red ballot papers have been prepared for candidates of the ruling party and green ones for those of the opposition. After the proclamation of the results which have returned the ruling party to power, Goha goes to the market and sees a magnificent piece of fruit, a big green water melon. He is delighted by its fine colour and buys the fruit which is unfamiliar to him. On returning home he discovers to his surprise that the inside of the melon is red and that he has been deceived.

Other aspects of Goha's personality make him unlike the usual hero of children's tales, as for example his disrespectful attitude towards Arab social institutions such as marriage, religious rites, the law.

By his pranks he pokes fun at religious bigots, ridicules high-sounding phrases and uses the *Kadi* as a cat's-paw.

In yet another story, Goha, who is about to marry, has a house built and orders the carpenter to "put the woodwork for the roof on the floor and the woodwork for the floor on the roof".

The carpenter expresses surprise at this and asks Goha to explain: "Don't you know that marriage makes everything topsy-turvy", he replies. "So if we turn things upside down beforehand order will be re-established after marriage".

Goha is also a very poetic character, a sort of Oriental Pierrot who sings while he runs, for he likes to hear his own voice from afar, and outwits two thieves who have challenged him to climb a tree and pick fruit, by unexpectedly taking his shoes with him: "Perhaps I will find a path leading from the tree-top," he explains "And if I do, I shall need my shoes."

Goha forms an integral part of the collective Arab imagination. Not only is he the hero of folk tales, he is also to be found in proverbs and popular expressions. When business is bad it is customary to remark that it is "like Goha's affairs". And when people are faced with a situation that they do not understand or with behaviour whose motivations are unclear, they say: "Do you know what tore Goha's tarbush?"

Goha has been updated in modern literature, notably in the works of Mohammed Dib, Kateb Yacine and Rachid Boudjeba. In children's literature, too, there are characters such as the dreamer, the simpleton and the wise fool who recall different aspects of his personality and Goha-like situations. For example, the story of the sultan who is convinced that the moon is following him, since he sees it move when he moves and stop when he stops.

The same kind of problem exercises Goha: he is seen one day going down to the bottom of a deep well, for he has seen the fallen moon in the water. Once below he looks up and is reassured when he sees that the moon is back in its place.

■ **Georgia Makhlouf**

Goha and his donkey pictured in a cartoon from a Lebanese children's book.

Drawing © from *Stories of Jeha* by Rose Gorayeb, Dar al-Kitab al Lubnani, Tyre

THE MONKEY KING SUN WUKONG

by Sun Youjun

WHEN I was a child I used to declare proudly, "I'm Sun Wukong!" Now, without being taught, my nine-year-old son does exactly the same. I've often heard other children identify themselves in the same way, and in fact it would be difficult to find a Chinese child who doesn't know about Sun Wukong, the Monkey King.

Sun Wukong, also known as Monkey, is the hero of *Pilgrimage to the West,* a classical novel written by the Ming-dynasty scholar Wu Cheng'en (c. 1500 to 1582). Taking his inspiration from popular folktales about a Tang-dynasty monk (known as Tripitaka in the novel) who went to the West to seek Buddhist scriptures, as well as from vernacular literature of the Song and Yuan dynasties, Wu Cheng'en created a great mythical novel.

According to historical records, a young monk named Xuan Yang actually did go to India to fetch Buddhist sutras. But because he went alone on a trip of several thousand kilometres which took seventeen years, and encountered many dangers and difficulties, this journey became invested with a strong mythical flavour in the folk stories. Perhaps because the image of Tripitaka was limited by the historical character, in the fantastic stories his place was gradually taken by a monkey monster who helped him in his travels. In *Pilgrimage to the West,* this monkey becomes Sun Wukong, the novel's principal character.

Children love fabulous stories, and it is through its rich and wonderful fantasies that *Pilgrimage to the West* has satisfied their curiosity and aroused their imagination, while the character of Monkey Sun Wukong has anchored itself firmly in their hearts. Sun Wukong starts life as a little monkey born out of a boulder on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, a special boulder which contains the essence of Nature itself. At first, he is carefree and plays with the other little monkeys on the mountain. Then he is elected the Monkey King because he is the first to enter the Cave of the Waterfall. But later, aware that his life is controlled by the King of Hell and that he will die someday, he becomes distressed and is determined to find a way to conquer death.

After crossing many mountains and seas, he at last finds an immortal from whom he learns many magic arts. He is able to jump 108,000 *li* in one somersault, visit Heaven at will and enter the Dragon King's Palace at the bottom of the sea by chanting a magic spell. He also learns how to pluck out hairs from his body and transform them into hundreds of little monkeys to help him defeat his enemies. He masters "seventy-two transformations" and can change into anyone at will, so convincingly that if he turns himself into a certain demon, even the demon's wife cannot see through his trick. He can also transform himself into things such as a pine tree, or a temple, using his eyes as windows, his mouth as the gate and his tongue as the statue of a god. Unfortunately, however, he cannot find a proper place to put his tail so he changes it into a flagpole behind the temple. But how can a flagpole be erected at the rear of a temple? As a result, his opponent sees through this particular transformation.

So children love this most marvellous of heroes who will never submit to oppression and insult. No matter how strong his enemies, he dares to fight back and defeat them with his skills. When the court of the nether world decides that, according to the "Book of Life and Death", Monkey Sun Wukong's life-span has ended and draws his soul to the nether regions, he takes out his weapon, the "gold-hooped staff", from inside his ear, and fights his way to the palace of the King of Hell.

Crossing out his name and date of death from the "Book of Life and Death" as well as those of other monkeys, he declares, "That settles it! We are no longer under your control!" But when the Jade Emperor, supreme ruler of the heavens, hears of this, he flies into a rage. After failing to cheat the Monkey King into submission, the Jade Emperor tries to resort to force by sending heavenly troops to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit on a punitive expedition against him. Monkey in turn rises in resistance and vanquishes the heavenly generals and their troops.

In the end, the Jade Emperor has no alternative but to agree to give him the title of Paragon of Heaven and put him in charge of the Garden of Immortal Peaches. But one day the Heavenly Queen plans a banquet at which the peaches of immortality will be served and all the gods and deities are invited except the Paragon of Heaven. Unable to swallow such an insult, he changes into an immortal and arrives at the banquet before the others, drinks the imperial wine, and eats the peach and elixir, thus destroying the banquet and creating havoc in Heaven.

Escorting Tripitaka to the Western Heaven to fetch Buddhist sutras, Monkey Sun Wukong shows the true qualities of a hero. He is accompanied by two other disciples, Pigsy and Sandy, who protect their weak and incompetent master. Pigsy is also a children's favourite. A rather lazy and gluttonous character, he always wants to quit and go home whenever they meet with difficulty and could hardly be considered a hero. Tripitaka encounters "eighty-one perils" on the way, monsters of every description representing natural calamities and evil forces, and it is Monkey who always fights in the forefront and sweeps away demons and ghosts.

On the way to the West, he displays not only a dauntless spirit but also intelligence and wisdom. He is adept at discovering an enemy's weak points and reacts accordingly. When he encounters a strong opponent, he transforms himself into a tiny gnat. Hiding himself under the bubbles in some tea which the monster is going to drink, he works his way into the belly of his foe, where he turns somersaults and handstands until the sufferer begs for mercy.

Before the Monkey escorts Tripitaka to the West, Avalokitesvara plays a little trick on him by putting a cap with a gold hoop on his head and teaching Tripitaka to recite the "Incantation of the Gold Hoop" for fear the Monkey will disobey his master. Monkey is deceived into putting on this headgear, so that the hoop rests tightly on his head. All Tripitaka needs to do then is to recite a spell and Monkey will roll on the ground because of the pain in his head as the hoop tightens.

During their journey, Tripitaka always uses this method to punish Monkey, sometimes for no reason whatsoever; but though he is infinitely resourceful, Sun Wukong can find no way to rid himself of this hoop. This punishment always evokes immense sympathy from children who, perhaps, associate it with the restraints forced on them by seemingly unreasonable parents and teachers in their own lives.

Pilgrimage to the West has 100 chapters and is more than 800,000 Chinese characters in length. The original is too long and the language too difficult for children, so in recent years various adaptations of the novel have been published specially for children, as well as a growing number of strip cartoons and picture-books. Even many popular science books for children make use of the Sun Wukong character. There can be no doubt that the image of Monkey Sun Wukong will long continue to be cherished by Chinese children.

■ Sun Youjun

SUN YOUJUN, *of China, is a well-known author of books for children.*

PILGRIMAGE TO THE WEST is a very long Chinese novel of fantastic adventures written in the 16th century under the Ming dynasty by Wu Cheng'en. The main hero of the story, which runs to a hundred chapters and has over 800,000 ideograms, is clever and unfailingly resourceful Sun Wukong the Monkey King, who never spurns an opportunity to outwit an enemy. Here he is seen escorting the feeble and clumsy pilgrim Tripitaka who travels with two disciples one of whom, the lazy and gluttonous Pigsy, is a favourite children's character like the Monkey King.

Drawing © Miao Zhen, Peking

IVANUSHKA
PRINCE OF SIMPLETONS

by Valentin Berestov

Drawing © Tatiana Mavrina, Moscow

This horse which "gallops higher than the murmuring forest and lower than the moving cloud" and "brushes the meadows and fields with its tail" is the steed of Ivanushka, one of the most popular figures in Russian folklore. A hero who is by turns the son of the Tsar and a simpleton, Ivanushka was immortalized in the 19th century by the Siberian writer Pyotr Ershov. The above drawing is by Tatiana A. Mavrina, a noted Soviet illustrator of children's stories, especially those of Pushkin. Her outstanding work has been recognized by the International Board on Books for Young People, which has awarded her its Hans Christian Andersen medal.

EVERY nation has its own fund of amusing stories about simple-minded and eccentric folk, and more mysterious fairy-tales in which knights errant overcome monsters to save members of their family, beautiful maidens or mankind in its entirety from all manner of fates worse than death. The Russians are no exception. But, as the saying goes, fools sometimes rush in where angels fear to tread; and when they do the characters from the former type of story become the heroes of the latter.

One well-known figure in Russian folklore is *Tsarevitch Ivan,* the noble prince; but it is another hero, *Foolish Ivanushka,* the unattractive, shabbily-dressed, soot-stained lad, who, to the great delight of listeners and readers of the tale, captures the iridescent firebird *Zhar-ptitsa,* wins the heart of the most beautiful girl in the world, plunges into the nether regions, swims across the ocean and flies up beyond the clouds to drink tea and converse amicably with the Sun and the Moon—sometimes as an honoured guest, sometimes as a visiting relative.

I was still a very small child when I first heard the tale of Ivanushka from my country-woman grandmother. I well remember how his fabulous horse rose up before me, in the darkness of the night, every time I listened to the story.

But even without a story-telling grandmother I would have discovered and appreciated Ivanushka at an early age. Every Russian child is familiar with the poem about *Konyok-gorbunok,* the small, unsightly horse with long ears and a pair of humps, whose odd appearance matches that of his master, who is none other than Ivanushka.

How this poem came to be written is almost a fairy-tale in itself. In 1834, at the age of nineteen, a young man called Pyotr Ershov travelled to the Russian capital from the Siberian city of Tobolsk, to "look and learn". Siberia was a land rich in story-tellers; indeed, they formed a sort of rural aristocracy and were much in demand as companions on hunting trips and wood-cutting expeditions into the forests and on the fishing boats that ventured out into the northern seas. Listening to them during the long dark nights, the weary peasants and fisherfolk forgot their burdens and were mentally transported into a completely different world.

The young man from Tobolsk had listened to many of their tales as a child; and he had just discovered the stories in rhyme written by the great poet Pushkin. Suddenly, an astonishing thing happened—an event that in its own way resembled one of Ivanushka's adventures: Pyotr Ershov himself sat down and wrote a magnificent tale in verse, as rich in language and imagery as the popular stories he had heard and as poetic as anything written by his recently-discovered master.

It was to be his only masterpiece. Throughout the rest of his life, which was full of labour and misfortune, his writing never rose above the commonplace. As director of the high school at Tobolsk, he was cut off from his roots among the people and the magic spark which had transformed him for a brief moment during his youth died out.

Maxim Gorky, who greatly appreciated Ershov and regretted that none of his subsequent writings matched his first youthful effort, urged the critic Chukovsky to continue where Ershov had left

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VALENTIN DIMITRIEVICH BERESTOV *is a noted Soviet poet and author of children's books. A specialist in literary detection, he has discovered hitherto unidentified verses by Pushkin, on whom he has written a number of essays. He has published over 40 books of poems, some written specially for children.*

off. The book of tales in verse intended for the tiniest children aged between two and five that Chukovsky produced in the 1920s was a great and immediate success.

The first and most important collection of tales of this kind had appeared in 1855 and 1863 in three volumes edited by A.N. Afanasiev, with the title *Russkie Narodnye Skazki* (Russian Popular Tales). "Particularly interesting in these tales", wrote Afanasiev in the first edition, "is the role played by the youngest of three brothers. Most of the tales begin with the time-honoured formula: "Once upon a time a man had three sons; two of them were clever, but the third was stupid". The elder brothers are smart, in the everyday, market-place sense of the term, and are only concerned with feathering their own nest. The third son is stupid in that he lacks this practical wisdom; he is a simple, guileless soul who shares in the troubles of others to the extent of neglecting his own security and interest".

According to custom, the entire inheritance, including the right to perform heroic deeds and miracles goes to the two elder brothers. Ivanushka, the third son, is not even favoured with intelligence or good looks. He is, as it were, kept on the sidelines, only allowed to participate when his brothers have failed in some enterprise. Only later does it become clear that the "smart" brothers, playing the game according to their own selfish rules, are of little account when compared with the "stupid" Ivan, and that their role in the story is to reveal that his inferiority in comparison with them is, in fact, the source of his strength.

Ivanushka is indeed a paradoxical character, equally capable of lying lazily on top of the stove, letting his thoughts wander or catching flies, and of leaping into action while his brothers are snoring away, oblivious to all around them. In one tale, their dying father begs the three of them to take turns watching over his tomb at night. The two elder brothers think it far more sensible to sleep comfortably in their beds when their father dies and send Ivanushka to keep watch in their place. As a result he undergoes the experiences originally intended for them.

Ivanushka's three nights of vigil resemble the sleeplessness of the philosopher, the poet or the lovesick swain. In his trance-like state, various things happen. His dead father appears and they talk together. On the third night his father presents him with a fabulous horse: "The horse gallops, the earth trembles, flames burst from its ears and smoke from its nostrils".

Presenting his horse to Ivanushka, his father says: "May it serve you as it has served me". But the horse in question is no ordinary, stable-loving steed. Whistled up or called by an incantatory phrase, it appears from nowhere, and just as suddenly disappears. *Sivka-burka*, as it is called is, in fact, a magic horse, symbolizing the spiritual testament of the father, the blessing which fathers at all times have given their offspring, the message handed down from generation to generation by all peoples, past, present and those to come. The horse is in fact Pegasus, the symbol of poetry, the traveling-companion of inspiration. And the gift of inspiration is what Ivanushka possesses in the highest degree.

In one of the tales, Ivanushka one day emerges from the horse's mouth transformed into a smartly dressed, handsome young man. Obviously he has now become one and the same person as Tsarevitch Ivan. With other suitors, he attempts to leap, on horseback, to the window of a high tower where the Tsar's daughter is sitting, to kiss her and take from her hands the handkerchief which is the pledge of their forthcoming marriage. Three attempts are allowed and on the first day Ivan almost reaches the goal, winning even his brother's admiration.

Suddenly, the handsome knight disappears and in his place there stands the stupid lad, who asks: "Wasn't that me?". Ivan's remark, which provokes unrestrained mirth on the part of his brothers, seems to be designed to test them, to find out whether they indeed love him and whether, if only for a moment, they can imagine him as a winner, as the object of general celebration.

The winner, like Cinderella, wishes to remain anonymous. All the young people are invited into the palace, where they drink beer and jealously watch to see whether someone wipes his lips with the precious handkerchief. Nobody notices Ivanushka, who is sitting behind the stove, black with soot, his hair tousled, watching the proceedings with his mouth wide open. Only on the third day is he offered a drink of beer, whereupon he wipes his mouth with the princess's handkerchief. He has come to the palace in the form of a simpleton rather than a prince, because it is important for him to know whether the princess will be true and faithful to her promise. And if the first kiss was given by a prince, the responding kiss is received by the simpleton. Thus not only Ivanushka, but also his bride, enter a new world, where fairytale justice is seen to be done.

The tales about Ivanushka have immense historical depth. If we could travel in a time-machine back into the Russian past, one of our first encounters would be with a feudal peasant who, to use the Russian expression, *pridurivaetsja,* that is to say, deliberately passes himself off as a fool in the eyes of the gentry and the authorities, while at the same time preserving jealously the values ▶

Photo © "The Soviet Artist" publishers, Moscow

Carried away from the kingdom of the Kusmans by his ally the grey wolf who has kidnapped queen Helen for him, Ivanushka flees through the immense Russian forest, holding his beloved in his arms. The above painting, *The Tsarevich Ivan on his Grey Wolf,* is by Victor M. Vasnetsov (1848-1926) who painted many themes from Russian folklore and popular fiction. It is now in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Photo © Progress Publishers, Moscow

Borne skywards by a little horse with a pair of humps and long ears, Ivanushka gallops in headlong pursuit of the Firebird which he must take to the Tsar. Vladimir A. Milashevski drew this illustration for Ershov's book *The Little Humpbacked Horse*.

Photo © Progress Publishers, Moscow

In a story called *The Frog Princess*, Ivanushka must marry whoever retrieves an arrow which he shoots into the distance. Poor Ivanushka! Left, he is seen at the moment when he discovers that destiny has selected a frog to be his spouse. However, the frog soon turns into a beautiful girl, Vassilissa the Very Wise, and although they experience many vicissitudes they eventually live happily ever after. The illustration is by Ivan Bilibin (1876-1942), a graphic artist and theatre designer who was noted for his illustrations of Russian folk-tales and songs. He created a style related to Art Nouveau which influenced wood sculpture, embroidery and popular imagery. Below, Ivanushka as depicted by 8-year-old Liuda Rakitina of Syktyvkar, a town in the north of the Soviet Union.

▶ and culture of the people. Further back in time we would briefly meet the warrior on horseback and in armour, defending his land from devastating invasion. Further back again, we would witness the collapse of kinship-based society, where the youngest brother was expected to remain with his parents until their death, as guardian of the hearth (the modern folklore specialist V. Anikin has discussed this subject). Finally, we would find ourselves in the heart of a society based on kinship, and the early days of *homo sapiens*. If we are to believe V. Propp, the author of *The Historical Roots of Fairy-Tales,* the initiatory experiences imposed by their elders on adolescents were similar in nature to the training received by modern cosmonauts and involved elements of hair-raising adventure, the domination of fear and pain and the accomplishment of extremely difficult tasks. If fairy-tales indeed have their roots in actually performed rituals, then we may discern a thread which runs from our distant ancestors, who were virtually powerless before the forces of nature and who created standards of brotherhood and justice without which humanity would have been unlikely to survive its infancy, far ahead into some splendid future age, where men will no longer be powerless in the face of the elements and where all people will live according to fairy-tale standards of behaviour.

It is by no means a coincidence that the greatest secrets of nature are revealed, as in a fairy-tale, only to the most exceptional individuals, and often to those considered to be the most eccentric.

This is why the role of those who write for children is so important. For the sake of their people and of mankind in its entirety they must present the child, at the earliest possible age, with the "fabulous horse" of inspiration.

■ Valentin Berestov

Books for eager fingers

When blind children learn to read, Braille is the magic key that opens for them the door to the priceless treasures of world literature. In the world of books they can hold their own with anyone and they are soon immersed in the stirring adventures of such heroes and heroines as Peter Pan, Alice, Pinocchio, Sandokan, Gavroche, Sun Wukong, Leuk the Hare and Nasrudin Hodja.

Photo Unesco

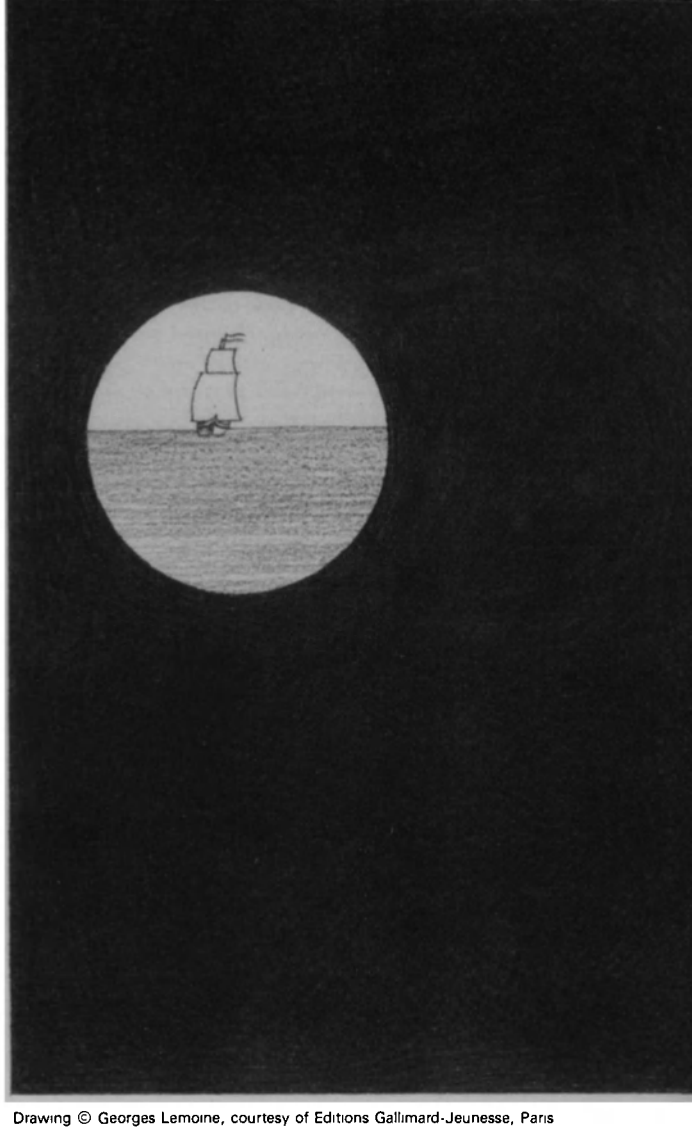
La Llave Magica **(The Magic Key, see photo) is one of a series of specially-shaped books in Braille, produced by the Braille Foundation of Uruguay, for young blind children aged from six to eight. Just as colour and image motivate the sighted child to read, so shape arouses the interest of the visually handicapped child. As he begins to finger the book his curiosity is awakened and he feels the urge to read the story.**

For the deaf-blind child, Braille books are even more essential, providing as they do virtually the only source of culture, entertainment and information. Although using the manual alphabet by touch permits communication with relatives and friends, it is through the embossed system of reading and writing that the intellectual development of deaf-blind children is chiefly sustained and nourished.

An interesting development which could help to further the integration of blind children into the world of their sighted peer groups is the production of texts in both Braille and ink-print, with embossed illustrations in colours. A highly successful example of this type of publication is *Red Thread Riddles* (see the Unesco Courier, January 1981), a book which Unesco helped to produce and which is now available in English, French and Spanish and will shortly be published also in German and Italian.

WRITING FOR CHILDREN IS NO CHILD'S PLAY

by Michel Tournier



Drawing © Georges Lemoine, courtesy of Editions Gallimard-Jeunesse, Paris

"Beside himself with excitement, Friday climbed to the top of a tree. He had brought a telescope with him and he trained it on the approaching ship which was now clearly visible." In Michel Tournier's book *Vendredi ou la Vie Sauvage* (Friday and Robinson: Life on Esperanza Island), from which these words are taken, Robinson elects to stay on the island whilst Friday leaves for Europe on the ship. Not entirely satisfied with his earlier book, *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique* (Friday or the Other Island, 1967), in which he had taken up and examined in depth the theme of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Tournier set out to write the story again in a leaner, tauter form. When the new version, *Vendredi ou la Vie Sauvage*, was published in 1971, he discovered, to his surprise, that he had written a book for children!

IN 1967 I published my first book, a novel entitled *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique*. It was a new version of Daniel Defoe's famous *Robinson Crusoe* of 1719, countless "remakes" of which had already been produced down the centuries. For me the ground-rules were to remain as faithful as I could to my model while, as it were, discreetly and surreptitiously smuggling into it all kinds of modern assumptions in the realms of philosophy, psychoanalysis and ethnography. I should add that I had just taken the competitive exam for teachers of philosophy, and was stuffed full of Jean-Paul Sartre and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

A later re-reading of my novel made me realize its inadequacies and how far short I had fallen of my first ideal. The philosophy stared me in the face from every page, weighing on the story and holding it back. I very quickly felt the need to rewrite the book in a leaner, tauter form, adding purely narrative episodes and weaving the philosophy more closely and deeply into the story; not changing it, but concealing it. And so, using *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique* as a kind of draft, I wrote a new book—not a line of which was copied from the first—called *Vendredi ou la Vie Sauvage*, (Friday and Robinson: Life on Esperanza Island).

And that was when the surprises began. The first was to discover that I had written a children's book. Yes indeed, the brevity and clarity of the story, the pace of the plot —everything made of this little novel a popular "classic" of the future in the proper sense of the word: one that is read in class. Meanwhile, and this was the second surprise, I couldn't find a publisher. For at the same time, I discovered how "children's" publishers or the corresponding departments of the major publishers work. *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique* had been published by a dozen foreign firms. Those that had a "junior" section unanimously rejected *Vendredi ou la Vie Sauvage*—and the specialized houses proved just as unwelcoming. Why? Because the children's book trade operates by laws that absolutely ban all genuine literary creativity.

Those laws impose a ready-made idea of children stemming directly from the nineteenth century and a mythology that is a compound of Victor Hugo and Queen Victoria. In the United States, the world of children's books has long been dominated by the Walt Disney factory. The specialized publishing houses live in terror of the watchful gaze of parents' or booksellers' associations and a certain kind of press, which together make up a vast network where whispers play their part. The publication of a children's book that fails to comply with the requirements of this censorship not only means that the press and booksellers will boycott it, but discredits the entire output of the publishers, henceforth viewed as "suspect". Hardly surprising, then, that any original or creative work is automatically refused by reading departments.

In most cases, standard moulds baptized "collections" are produced, each with its own collection editor, in which pseudo-writers unwearyingly cast their made-to-measure, pre-programmed products. The "audience" for each collection is described in an "identikit" picture giving its age, sex and social status. In many cases, the entire operation is dominated by a political or religious ideology. Should the unfortunate author of a work that is original—and hence, unlike any other—knock on the door of one of these fortresses, his manuscript will for politeness' sake be kept for a few days, but it won't even be read.

All this was ten years ago. Thanks to the success of my novels, some publishers have finally accepted my *Vendredi ou la Vie Sauvage*. But many of them were purely literary or even avant-garde publishers, with no previous experience in children's books.

This brought me to question seriously whether there was any reason to speak of children's books. Closely considered, the idea of a "junior library" is fairly recent: it dates to the very period of the Victorian myths about children that I have just denounced. But what about Perrault's *Fairy-Tales*, La Fontaine's *Fables* or Lewis Carroll's *Alice?* And what about such classics as the Grimm and Andersen stories, the Orien- ▶

MICHEL TOURNIER *is an internationally known French writer. Notable among his published works, which have been widely translated, are:* Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique *(1967; published in the USA as* Friday *and in the UK as* Friday or the Other Island*),* Le Roi des Aulnes *(1970;* The Erl-King*) which won the Goncourt Prize, and* Les Météores *(1975;* Gemini*). He has also written books for children, including* Pierrot ou les Secrets de la Nuit *(1979).*

▶tal legends, Selma Lagerlöf's *Nils Holgerson* and Saint-Exupéry's *Little Prince?* Quite simply, I feel we must unflinchingly recall that except for Selma Lagerlöf, none of these authors was writing specifically for children. But being geniuses, they wrote so well, so clearly and so concisely—qualities that are rare and hard to achieve—that they could be read by everyone, *even children!*

To me this "even children" has come to be of major and even commanding importance. It is a literary ideal that I strive, with infrequent success, to attain. Frankly, at the risk of scandalizing the reader, I maintain that Shakespeare, Goethe and Balzac are marred by a defect that I find quite unforgivable—children cannot read them. For my part, I would gladly sharpen my pen and recast my other novels, *Le Roi des Aulnes* (The Erl-King), *Les Météores, Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar,* in purer, less cluttered and more chiselled form: in a word, so that even children could read them.

If I have not done so, the reason is not natural laziness—it would be a gigantic undertaking—but because it would achieve nothing. Adults would not read these "children's stories" and nor would children, because no "children's publisher" would agree to handle such "non-standard" books.

But on one occasion at least I have achieved my ideal. For years I had tried to weave into a perfect adventure-story, with a powerful metaphysical foundation, the three principal characters of Italian comedy, Pierrot, Colombine and Harlequin. I finally succeeded. The result is a short story some thirty pages long entitled *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la Nuit.* My chief publisher having opened a "junior section", I managed to persuade him to take on this "children's book", which he published separately from his collections, in a format that the house has never used before, rather as some towns used to map out a "red-light district" and surround it with a kind of *cordon sanitaire.* It should be said that two years later the book's popularity was such that it was included in one of the firm's regular collections, much as a son previously cursed and driven out by his father is welcomed back into the family when he has made his fortune. Be that as it may, these thirty pages—for which I would exchange all my other work—cannot find a publisher abroad.

Since the second version of *Vendredi* became so popular, I am constantly asked to speak about it to schools in France and the French-speaking countries. I listen to the children's questions and try to answer them. They are no more "childish" than those that adult readers ask: indeed, rather less so on the whole. Their bluntness always strikes at the heart of the matter: how long do you take to write a book? How much do you earn? If there are spelling mistakes in your manuscript, what does your publisher say? How much truth is there in your stories?

From these and a hundred other questions I have learnt a good deal through the answers I was forced to find, it being a principle of mine always to answer frankly and in full. The last question in particular calls the entire literary aesthetic into question. Need I recall that Marthe Robert calls her last book *La Vérité littéraire?* (Literary Truth?).

I begin my reply by writing on the blackboard a quote from Jean Cocteau: *I am a lie that always tells the truth.* Then I tell them about the origins of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (often the children have read my *Vendredi*). There was the true story of the Scottish helmsman Alexander Selkirk, who was cast away for four years and four months on Mas a Tierra island in the Pacific, and that is what inspired Defoe to write his novel. Now we know Selkirk's story from the report of Captain Woodes Rogers, who found the castaway and brought him back to civilization. But who has read it? Nobody but a handful of specialists. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* on the other hand, enjoys enormous international popularity to this day.

Why is it that fiction has so much more hold on the minds of men than the plain truth? The question is momentous, and he who found the answer would hold the key to masterpieces. Without making any such claims, let me none the less try to cast a little light on the enigma.

What is really most remarkable about Defoe's tale is that reading it alone is not enough. Indeed, in my belief, very few people read the full authentic version. The strength and value of the book lie in the fact that it prompts an irresistible urge to rewrite it. And that is why, as I said earlier, there are countless versions of the story, ranging from Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island* and Giraudoux's *Suzanne and the Pacific,* to Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson* and Saint-John Perse's *Images à Crusoé.*

Some masterpieces—and it is this that places them at the summit of world literature—contain an incitement to create, a contagious spirit of creativity. Setting the reader's inventiveness in motion is for me, I admit, the pinnacle of art. Paul Valéry used to say that inspiration is not the state in which the poet writes, but the state into which he hopes to bring his reader. I think that saying should be made the banner and foundation of a new aesthetic.

But does this not imply that the first criterion of a work of literature is its educational qualities? Montaigne said that educating a child is not filling a vase but lighting a fire. I don't believe it could be any better put. And for me too, the sign of my victory is the flame that I sometimes see in the eyes of my young readers, a living source of light and heat that my book has kindled in a child. A rare reward, but priceless, and one that redeems all the effort, all the loneliness and all the misunderstandings.

■ **Michel Tournier**

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The Monkey King Sun Wukong is portrayed in this watercolour painted in 1981 by a nine-year-old Chinese boy, Gejie Ou. *(See article page 28).*